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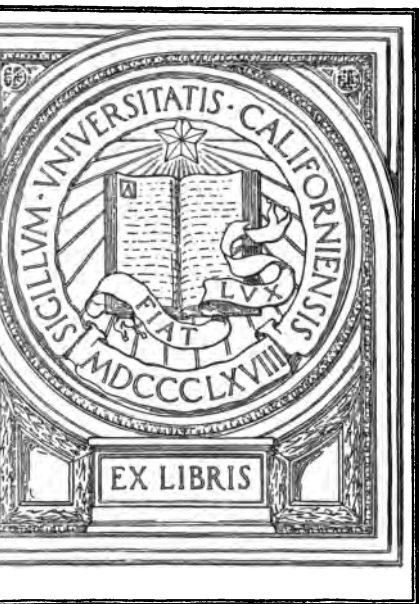
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ARDENT;
A TALE OF WINDSOR FOREST,

IN THE
Nineteenth Century.

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF HIS MOST GRACIOUS
MAJESTY,

GEORGE THE FOURTH.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

"The great business of all is virtue and wisdom."
Page 306 of Locke's 14th Edition on Education.

VOL. III.

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TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE
PARLIAMENT

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

ARDENT;

A TALE OF WINDSOR FOREST.

CHAPTER I.

ARDENT's agitation, when alone, after the worthy clergyman had left him, was considerable; the sentiments he had uttered, the urgency of his manner, all convinced our hero he was in earnest, and that every word that came from his mouth may have been considered as proceeding from the very bottom of his heart. His conviction of Mrs. Freelove's character staggered Ardent very much; he could not tell what to think; he believed he must have deceived himself, or she must have deceived him most egregiously; his curiosity might in part lead him to wish to explore her character more fully than he had hitherto done. He had as yet but witnessed the second act of the drama of this interesting indi-

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vidual, and a something impelled him onward to think she was worth developing farther, either as a consummately artful woman, as the Reverend Dr. Allworthy predicted, or as a mere simple character, which idea his own credulity still cherished, and that her failings had not proceeded so much from her own vicious propensities, as from ignorance of knowing better ; and, therefore, with this impression upon his mind, he resolved to give her one trial more.

The denouement of the plot, if there was one, seemed to Ardent to be approaching fast ; the arcanum, if there was any, would soon be made clear : either that she was in some degree a respectable individual, or that she was not.

It was thus our imprudent hero reasoned with himself : that he ought to call once again upon her, agreeable to his promise, to acquaint her of the result of his communication with the Reverend Dr. Allworthy. This sort of preparatory reasoning was the more necessary as an explanation of the impression Ardent received from the reverend divine, which had posed him, although not effectually, or in all probability he would not have called again ; and then this history must have

closed from the want of materials to continue it further; for, as our author has repeatedly remarked heretofore, all the narrations are facts, however disagreeable to our hero the adventures may have been, and certainly not of that attractive nature as to wish for a repetition.

The foregoing preliminaries being established in our reader's mind, it will now be the time to raise the curtain and introduce our hero and heroine in conversation together, *tête-a-tête*, in the evening of the same day that the Reverend Dr. Allworthy had called in the morning upon Ardent, at his house.

Ardent had knocked at the hall door, as was usual, and was admitted by Mrs. Freelove herself, who commenced the conversation, by asking him if he had written to the Reverend Dr. Allworthy.

"I have," replied Ardent, "and have said all I could or dare say; I have furthermore seen the Reverend Dr. Allworthy since. He thinks very ill of you, very ill indeed, and more so than I can communicate to you again."

"He has written to me," replied the lady, "stating he has many arrangements to make as

to the appointment of a patroness to the Sunday School, but for the present he will superintend it himself."

At this moment of the conversation came a loud knocking at the hall-door ; it was a thunderer, and put Mrs. Freelove and our hero in great consternation ; for he did not wish to have it known he had called upon her, any more than did the lady herself ; for it was now past eight o'clock, and a dark evening.

" It is Foresight, the astronomer, astrologer, and mathematician," exclaimed our hero's Armida. " Haste away, while I go to let him in at the hall-door ; do you keep close behind me, and enter the drawing-room, while I cross the hall for that purpose. You must there continue until I come to let you out ; as it is dark, he cannot see you through the glass door, unless he has the eyes of a cat. So, follow me, and walk close as my shadow, until you slide into your retreat, unperceived by him or any other person."

Our hero followed his conductress into the hall as she advanced forward to let in the friend of Ardent ; Ardent himself making good his retreat into the bower of his captivating mistress, the fair enchantress of the forest.

This was a hasty flight from the scene of action at the very critical period of coming to an understanding with the lady who had been depicted in such strong colours the same morning by the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, and in whose castle of enchantment he was now doomed to fly, like a squirrel, or scamper away with all the precaution imaginable, lest he should be found by his friend in a ridiculous situation, or one at all events inconsistent with the supposed dread he entertained of her duplicity and artifice. The little delay that necessarily occurred before Mr. Foresight could be let in, naturally enough excited his suspicions that the lady was under a prior engagement, or that some one or other was in the house that she wished to conceal. His patience and philosophical phlegm was thus exercised and put upon its trial, ere the lady of the house made her appearance ; and when she did, it was with all the self-collected possession of mind and person so usual with her. She silently pulled back the spring lock, and in walked one of the gravest characters of the village, and, as near as possible, of the precise age of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy himself, or rather that of our heroine.

“ Are you all alone ?” was the first question of our philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer (Ardent being near enough at hand to hear the interrogatory and the rejoinder).

“ You see I am,” was the jesuitical or evasive answer of the goddess of Idalian Groves and Paphian Bowers.

“ Nay, I can see nothing,” was the sage remark of our village Archimedes.

“ Then feel your way in with me,—here is my hand.”

“ So, so,” said the village Newton, laying hold of it with a chuckle of satisfaction ; and it might now be truly said, the blind was leading the blind ; they traversed the hall together, groping their way, and passing the head-quarters of our hero, who himself lay concealed on the sofa behind the door of the drawing-room, inwardly laughing at the odd incident and adventure, that the man who gave the caution should be now led as a captive prisoner within the castle gates of this fairy mansion.

We now leave the philosopher of the village and his mistress, for it is presumed the immaculate lady had a wish to learn a knowledge of the

sciences, and, from anything that our hero could discover to the contrary, she might be desirous of a more than imperfect information of the earthly as well as heavenly bodies, and their orbits or approximations. Be this as it may, what the eye saw not, or the ear heard not, will not be narrated; we therefore, for sufficient reasons already explained, may be expected to be silent upon part of the merits of the conversation that passed between them. No doubt can be rationally entertained, but the sparks of wit flew about in all directions, as sparks of fire from flint and steel; or, perhaps, the still more scientific properties of the load-stone and magnet may have been exemplified to a demonstration much to their mutual satisfaction; himself a philosopher by no means of the gravest cast of countenance—of pleasing manners and appearance as well as gentlemanly conversation, and herself a lady of the most seductive allurements, with all the fascinating properties and propensities of a courtesan of the olden time, when Pericles and Socrates discoursed with such ladies upon the government of states and the well-being of mankind; as Aspasia and Lais, for instance, who were well-informed

women, and are known to have afforded conversational breakfasts to the one, and ratiocination or a reciprocity of sentiment to others, even the formidable Alexander being under their influence.

We will now leave the heroine and her conversation with the friend of our hero, to return to the hero himself, for he is by far the most important personage in this history, as connected with the lady who had him now confined as a prisoner within a magical enclosure in her castle of the forest, from whence he dared not make his escape, or even attempt it, while he was under the influence of the spell of silence, which was placed upon him by the sybil, or rather the pleasing fairy of these Arcadian regions, ravishing to the senses, and leading the judgment in adamantine chains. It was a sort of delusion of the most pleasing and most distracting kind. It was realizing the days of Armida, it was anything but agreeable at times, and equally far from distressing at others. It was an enchantment of the most delicious character, and partaking of the most pleasing illusions, to live as Ardent had done. Some would have thought the world well

lost to have obtained or partaken of the same delusions, extravagances, and perplexities.

Extravagant and romantic history were again to be revived in him, and where could the scene have been laid with more ingenuity and art than in this fertile vale, romantically situated as it is within the very centre of the far-famed Windsor Forest. A love scene was necessary to revive the sombre appearance of the hills and the occasional gloom of the valleys, but with Ardent it had become quite different from either gloom or despondency, for no hero of antiquity ever enjoyed himself, occasionally, more than he did in these charming wilds and heath-like fortresses, which in some parts have remained in their native state from the barbaric ages of the world, when all was freedom, unrestrained by human laws, and only peopled by those who obeyed the laws of God and nature by intuition, and not instruction, who were simple as hunters and huntresses in the earliest periods of man's existence, or as the shepherds and shepherdesses of the hills and plains, where they led their flocks to pasture. Those were the golden days of happy ignorance and simplicity: the bounty of Providence supplied

the wants of mankind, and the sheep and lambs bleated at their feet. The wayward state of our hero and heroine's minds may have been considered as the corruscations or consequences of the imperfect state of morals in the body politic ; the fountain or source of knowledge being imperfect in this department, the springs being choked up, imperfect information was the consequence, and irregularities of moral and religious principles the natural termination.

Having led the reader a dance through the regions of former days, and back again, we will now so far endeavour to fix his attention and bring back to his recollection, that our fortunate and unfortunate hero appeared to have possessed the cap of Fortunatus, and placed himself precisely in the situation he wished, until a genii interposed, in the form of his friend Foresight, and dispossessed him of the power or influence that had facilitated his entrance into the delightful presence of his lovely mistress, and having usurped it, made use of the conqueror's privilege, banishing our friend Ardent to lonely solitude, where he lamented his isolated situation while reclining on the sofa, although he was in

that terrestrial paradise called a lady's drawing-room. In this state of darkness, peculiarly calculated for meditation and reflection, his active mind, as usual, began the process of defining, comprehending, and interchanging conversational powers within himself, and for a time he felt equally amused as if he had been present at the colloquial discourse which may have been expected between Mr. Foresight and the lady, and doubtless, peculiarly instructive and entertaining.

The Reverend Dr. Allworthy would have said Ardent was within the den of the lioness; and, if it is admitted she was the lioness of Windsor Forest, it is no very extravagant metaphor to call our hero the lion, as Richard the First, King of England, was called *Cœur de Lion*. Many heroes of antiquity, particularly in the pagan history, have derived the etymology of their surnames from less plausible sources. For instance, the tutelary deity of England, called St. George, overcame, as tradition informs us, a very great and monstrous dragon; by which we are to understand, the valour of Alfred, the English king, overcame the Danes, or, if antecedent to that, may probably have arisen, from some extraordi-

nary prowess on the part of the champions of this island over foreign invaders. Sufficient it is for me to quote precedents for our hero, Ardent, having assumed the title and designation of one of the lions of Windsor Forest.

Many were the vagaries and extravagances of our hero's imagination in this modern palace of enchantment; he reposed on the sofa, not as on a bed of roses, or the softest down, but a couch of thorns; for his mind was constantly at work to comprehend the real posture of affairs, both as related to the situation of his mistress, and the still more mysterious apparition of his friend Foresight, in a cloud of darkness, to whom he had given credit for no less than divine attributes, ascribing his morals and axioms of conduct to divine inspirations alone, and to nothing like the attributes of the god Cupid, whom heretofore he appeared to hold in the most sovereign contempt. But, before I record so doubtful a precognition as that of a grave philosopher discoursing with a lady of Mrs. Freelove's habits and virtues, it may be as well to arrest the reader's attention for a few seconds, to relate what passed in our hero's mind; for thoughts like lightning's

vivid flame illumine the dark profound, and leave no trace behind, but the effect is shown, and may be traced to its natural cause—an overheated atmosphere, oppressing the *cerebrum* and *cerebellum*, down to the very extremity of the *medulla oblongata*; in common phraseology, down to the very last bone of the back, called by anatomists the *os coccygis*.

“This eventful sofa,” thought Ardent, “on which I am now reclined, could it disclose its merry tales and relate the wonders of the past,—but silence forbids—saying, be merry and wise. It was the first witness to her assignation, and under its ample covering was hid the creaking boots, lest they should awake the stairs, grating to a lover’s ears; while the ripe beauty, blooming as Venus, was piously engaged below, preparing to say her prayers.”

With a heated mind, Ardent was tossed to and fro, like a ship upon a tempestuous sea. Occasionally he thought of the words of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, then of his former love-scenes; all was doubt, perplexity, and confusion, until the following colloquial discourse struck his ear, be-

tween his former mistress and his grave friend the astronomer :—

“ Your seclusion and retired manner of life, fair lady, with your labyrinthian manner of introducing your lover, or, I should say, friend, by a taper finger in the dark, instead of a wax taper, to these regions of solemn retirement and bliss, brings to my recollection the highly poetical description of the Bower of Woodstock, with its pretty inmate, the fair and beautiful Rosamond, who led her lover, the gracious monarch of these realms (so history records), into the pavilion of her secret chamber, through the medium of a silken thread, as you have now done myself by the soft pressure of your fair hand. But a truce with sensibilities, for they are only calculated to encumber the head of that silly young friend of mine, Mr. Ardent ; who, if report speaks truth, is angry with you for entertaining a young gentleman as his rival, three weeks in your house, contrary, as he would seem to imply, to his lawful authority and regulations as master of the ceremony in these enchanting and delightful abodes, which, it must be confessed, with a pretty inmate, have had no

small influence over his mind, and have, I think, distracted his best judgment, and made a fool of one whom his father intended should have been wise. But perhaps I interfere with some arrangements of a more domestic character, and you may have other engagements than listening to my observations on the follies of life, or wish to be incommoded at the present time with a lecture on grave discourses, either on the planetary spheres, or a treatise on this world's wonders; or perchance you may think a treatise on love would be preferable to either. In such case, Mr. Ardent should have been your companion, as being not only the younger man, but the most poetical in his ideas and imagination."

"Mention not his name, Mr. Foresight, I am very justly angry with him. He has traduced me to the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, and I am resolved he shall feel my resentment before I have done with him. But let us have done with the name of Ardent,—I am too angry with him to make him the subject of discourse."

The philosopher bowed an acquiescence to her will, and spoke thus:—

“ The last time I was with you, Mrs. Freelove, I stopped later than usual to explain the heavenly bodies; I hope you did not catch cold from the long time it took me to demonstrate the transit of Mars in conjunction with Venus. They are the nearest planets that we have, except the moon.”

“ No moon like the honeymoon, Mr. Foresight.”

“ In the estimation of lovers, I believe you are correct. Some favourable evening, I will do myself the pleasure to introduce to your notice that constellation of stars called by all the astronomical world Ursa Major, or the Great Bear.”

“ A bear in the heavens, Mr. Foresight?” said the lady, with feigned astonishment. “ You surprise me; it is by no means where I should have expected to have found one, even with my own eyes, or with the aid of magnifying-glasses. But astronomers are strange lovers of the heavenly bodies, and in the enthusiasm of mystical divination, call heavenly bodies bears, small and great I suppose, much after the manner that lovers call their mistresses angels, rather reversing the posi-

tion of the order of nature ; but all are mere imaginary creations of the fancy, ideal, and sometimes poetical."

" I never contradict the flattering comparisons of a pretty woman. The love of nature and the love of the fair sex were instituted by Divine Providence about the same time, all coeval with Adam; and if some profound logicians think rightly, very far antecedent to the date of the first man, Adam, of whose time of flourishing we have but a very imperfect knowledge, some saying six thousand years since, while others, with more probability, I think, go very much further back into the darkest ages, where all is involved in utter obscurity, lost in conjecture, and no tradition of the past but what is found in the Bible, with some few exceptions, as the Chinese chronology, which, perhaps, is not so imperfect as our own. But we are getting involved in abstruse subjects, too potent to be solved by either your penetration or my own."

" If it would not be disagreeable to you, Mr. Foresight, I should like to be favoured with my favourite comic song, as I am amused with your humorous mode of singing."

“Those gentlemen who endeavour to please the ladies,” said the astrologer, “should be ready to comply with their wishes, and, as I am in a merry mood this evening, I will do my best to entertain you.”

“Do, Mr. Foresight; pray do. Let me request it may be my favourite song, where the man expresses his occupations and pursuits, for a merrier fellow I never heard of.”

“Very well, madam; but you are sure we are all alone, for I have no ambition to appear ridiculous before strangers. Every judge, counsellor, bishop, and all the great dons, take off hat and wig, and with them restraint, in the presence of those they are upon the most intimate footing with, as I may be supposed to do when I relinquish, for a short time, my moral lectures, gravity, and philosophy, to sing a song of the burlesque description you require of me. So, to begin, with a hem. You say we are all alone; you are sure of that?”

“You see we are, my grave and dignified friend, for had you been a bishop I could not feel more anxious that you should act your part on the public stage of life with decency and de-

corum ; but when you are with me in retirement, your morals and gravity may be dispensed with as no longer necessary."

"Very well, madam: having your free permission to be as ridiculous as my song seems to imply is necessary for its execution and proper performance, and being also a bit of a mimic, I will try to assume the character I represent, namely, the tinker, with all accompaniments of symphony, usual in a well-executed performance belonging to that profession."

"Begin, sir, begin ; I am in an excellent disposition to be made merry."

SONG.

A tinker I am, my name is natty Sam,
From morn till night I trudge it ;
Yet so low is my fate, that my personal estate
Lies all within my budget.
Work for the tinker, Oh, good wives,
For we are the lads of metal :
'Twere well if you could mend your lives,
As I can mend your kettle.
Whiz, whiz, whiz.

The man of war, the man of the bar,
Physicians, priests, freethinkers,
That rove up and down great London town,
Why, what are they all but tinkers ?

Work for the tinker, Oh, good wives,
For we are the lads of metal;
'Twere well if you could mend your lives,
As I can mend your kettle.
Whiz, whiz, whiz.

Those amongst the great, who tinker the state,
And badger the minority,
Pray what is the end of their work, my friend,
But to rivet a good majority ?
Work for the tinker, Oh, good wives,
For we are the lads of metal ;
'Twere well if you could mend your lives,
As I can mend your kettle.
Whiz, whiz, whiz.

Here Ardent could not help making an observation to himself—I find my friend and my mistress have an ingenious way of passing their time together ; I do not object to my friend Foresight calling now and then, for that he is a well-meaning man I can plainly comprehend, a pure cucumber, a water melon complete. Besides, he is in general so studiously engaged in calculations of the heavenly bodies, that he never thinks of love, and at present he is ice, pure ice, and my Dulcinea is snow itself—I can tell that by their conversation—I wish a great icicle hung to each of their noses, they would not thus detain me in this laby-

rinth of love, so highly condemned by my good friend the Reverend Dr. Allworthy. What a happy man Foresight would be was he to become the husband of Mrs. Freeloze,—his head so full of the stars, he would not feel the weight of the antlers. She might then call him her Taurus, or bull with horns, wearing them erect and conspicuous to the world, but unconscious of their elevation upon his own *os frontis*, and while he showed her the phenomena above, she would laugh at his strong resemblance. But while I am indulging a laugh at my friend behind his back, I must not forget my own awkward situation, that of being in the harlot's pavilion, as my friend the Reverend Dr. Allworthy would now call her mansion; and how to get out without exciting the suspicion of the astronomer, I know not. A truce with reflections of a painful nature—my friend, the astrologer or astronomer, for it is immaterial by which name he is called in the progress of this history, is a serious character, and it would be treason to suppose such light subjects as woman's toys engage any portion of his attention—he is a philosopher complete, like philosophers were of old, who only associated

with pretty women for the benefit of their conversation, and to aid their ingenuity in finding out the true palladium of human happiness, profoundly, and, to my thinking, profanely called the philosopher's stone. The very wisdom, or implied wisdom, thereby elicited, has filled many volumes to amuse the idle, instruct the uninformed, and remove those dark clouds of melancholy from the ignorant and feeble-minded, accustoming them to think, in the most amusing and seductive manner, through the medium of their senses rather than their judgment, to which last quality so few human characters can pretend. Various have been the forms the learned have had recourse to, to make their information agreeable, to give the least shock to self-love, and lessen that exalted opinion each individual entertains of the profundity of his or her own understanding, when they are for the most part moved like automats, by master springs of the human passions, called men of thought; who govern the world by their precept or example, and not unfrequently by follies, amusements, or diversions, either conducive to health or to prevent that stagnation of life which would fix in the baser passions of avarice or mis-

rule, and frequently to abstract and distract the attention from those in power, who rule the roast and enjoy the principal blessings appertaining to the human race, while the more humble scarcely participate in those comforts (upon some occasions) which are permitted to negro slaves. But this is digressing with the velocity of a sky rocket, removing the mind from terrestrial occupations and pursuits to the springs of action and the reasonings of philosophy, which are said to be profound or exalted far above the ken of human research in general—neither time, nor opportunity, nor the various excitements or inducements to a life of study being either compatible with human existence, which consists chiefly in the exercise of the active principle of our natures rather than the passive or meditative. But I must return to our friends, entangled as they are in the elysium of enchantment, or that magic influence which a beautiful woman is said to have over the destinies of her lovers. Our friend Foresight may be very naturally supposed engaged in much such another visual search after imaginary happiness as occurred to the astronomer in ancient times, who, when in search, as it has

been alleged, after divine perfections, or viewing the heavenly bodies, fell into a ditch, afternoons and all, as has been modestly inferred by the learned. But the philosopher of the village speaks, and he is deserving of the utmost attention, by way of perceiving the easy manner by which vice and profligacy hold in their trammels the wisest of men. A silken net of loose desires is all that is required to form a coalition between a perfect character and an imperfect one—but I should rather say none are perfect, no not one. Not that I mean to infer that our friend Foresight is not in every respect a most estimable character, and, perhaps, more nearly resembled the peculiarities of Sir Roger De Coverly in his attachment or rather acquaintance with the fair widow, than any other personage of this dramatic history: but it is even doubtful to the present day, now more than twenty years since, if he ever entertained for her a real regard, or whether or not it did not partake more of the nature of a casual acquaintance, which was certainly a less troublesome and afflicting passion, if it was one at all, than possessed our hero Ardent; for his was evidently of an active principle rather

than of a passive description. But this village philosopher again speaks, and I must be very attentive to learn what can have been the urgent business that brought this Mentor into the society of the fascinating sorceress."

"Dear madam," said this Paul Pry of the skies, "are you sure we are all alone—that is, that you have no other company in the house?"

"You are very anxious to know, Mr. Foresight; and it is very extraordinary you should be so difficult to be convinced."

"My only reason for asking you was, I thought I heard something moving in the drawing-room."

"Your fears are groundless, and your apprehensions of being discovered in my company are not in your favour; for I entertain a very sovereign disinclination to assure those who are so easily disconcerted."

"Then I am satisfied; only I thought I heard movements, but it may have been a mistake. I have put in my pocket, for your inspection, a very curious telescope."

"Let me see it; I have, woman like, my share of curiosity in the works of art, as well as the mechanism of nature."

“ Foresight fumbled about for it some time, which the lady observing, in her sarcastic and satirical manner, remarked, “ So, so, sir, I perceive there is more to show than you have expressed, or why so long in extricating it from the sanctuary of your pocket.”

“ I ask you a thousand pardons,” said the diffident philosopher, or affected to be so ; for perhaps it was no more than badinage, or a playful comic manner of producing the tube, to excite her attention ; for most men like to take little familiarities and seeming liberties with those whom they think they cannot very well offend, or who will return the insinuation, intimation, or inuendo, with interest—it is the toying of the sexes when not observed by a third person, and this is particularly so with those not celebrated for the most confirmed habits of propriety, who rather laugh at folly than be serious for even one short hour. The tube was at last produced, after much struggling to extricate it from its hiding-place, and the lady began her inquiries into the especial purpose for which it was designed, pleading ignorance of the utility of such an instrument, until it was lengthened, and, by various devices,

shown the peculiar advantages it gave to the science of astronomy, beyond any thing the eye could compass or the imagination conceive without the assistance of this truly philosophical instrument, containing glasses of great magnifying powers. But the philosopher's own words are more to the purpose than any general terms, by which the sense may be conveyed in more ambiguous phrases and doubtful reasonings than would be desirable or required by an intelligent and curious reader.

“ Here it is,” said he, “ and a very useful instrument as ever I was possessed of, through which may be seen, one after the other, as the evenings may be propitious, all the constellations, from Ursa Major to those that compose the Milky Way. And had I my celestial globe with me, I could explain all those demarcations in the heavens so well described in every astronomical vocabulary, as, for instance :—

“ ‘ The Ram, the Bull, the Heavenly Twins,
And next the Crab, the Lion shines,
The Virgin and the Scales ;
The Scorpion, Archer, and Sea-Goat,
The Man that holds the watering-pot,
And the Fish with the glittering scales.’ ”

“ Very good, truly ; an excellent description you have given of the celestial regions, and your telescope, too,—I am glad you brought that with you, however, for we can have a peep through it at all the heavenly bodies,” said the lady, laughing.

“ I beg leave to request, Mrs. Freelove, that I may not be misapprehended, I really am serious :—however indifferent or ludicrous my descriptions may appear to you, they are *bonâ fide* faithful facts, as any boy’s Elements of Astronomy would convince you of.”

“ I do not doubt what you say, in the least, Mr. Foresight : all I maintain is, it is a queer incident that a man should hold the watering-pot and a virgin be in the scales. I vow a peep at them through your telescope would be delightful.”

“ I think, Mrs. Freelove, you are rather profane this evening in your constructive reasonings—fie ! fie ! it is very naughty of you. But are we really alone, and no one in the drawing-room ?”

“ To please you, Mr. Foresight, and that you

may be made no longer uncomfortable with suspicions that haunt your imagination as cobwebs occasionally do the brains of the most learned blockheads, and yours too at the present moment—but I will call out the cat, and turn her out of doors on the lawn, when I hope you will be happy, as it is she alarms you—"Here, puss, puss, puss," said she, while the cat mewed and followed her, "I must turn you out, your Tommy is catterwawling for you, so come along," said the lady, at the same time leaving the room and Mr. Foresight. Herself and cat having made their exit, she shut the parlour door, and, coming to Ardent in the drawing-room, said, "Now, now, go out with the cat at the lawn door."

Ardent on tip-toe followed the lady and her tortoiseshell cat, and both Ardent and the cat made their departure together; himself happy in being delivered from such restraint as that of being compelled to hear the conversation that passed between Mr. Foresight and the lady of such attractive fascinations.

Upon Mrs. Freelove's return to the parlour and to the friend of Ardent, she was again ques-

tioned by Mr. Foresight, "Are you sure we are now all alone, and that there is no other company in the house?"

"You are the only person except myself and servants; I hope you will now believe me, for I positively speak the truth. You have not even a cat to inconvenience you, and your apprehensions, as I said before, are perfectly groundless, so that if you have any more communications to make to me, I am a willing listener."

"Pray does Ardent ever visit you now?"

"I have not seen him for many days, nor am very likely to it, as he is ashamed to show his face; he is jealous, and to such a degree that I think he means me no good. He does not like my having any male visitors, but as many of my own sex as I please, so long as they are of good character."

What further transpired between the lady of this Mohammedan paradise and the village philosopher, mathematician, and astronomer, is unknown to Ardent; neither is it his wish to disclose those mysteries that were never intended to be divulged to mortal man, but are

now for ever hid from the scrutinizing search of the profane and the uninitiated in mystical divinations, and all those secret intimations of a superior agency which will now lie buried in the womb of time, until all things be made manifest at the great day of retribution, when the just will be separated from the unjust.

CHAPTER II.

ARDENT retired from the house by the glass-door that opened upon the lawn, and happy in his escape from thralldom and the inconveniences attending a long confinement in a dark room, beset as he was part of the time by his own imagination, painful enough to be borne with at any time, but particularly so under such peculiar circumstances as the leaving of his mistress to give place to his friend; and while he was endeavouring to explain and reclaim her by all the eloquence of the most persuasive reasoning, or was about to commence, when the thundering report of the knocker through the house gave the alarm that a visitor was at hand that could not well be refused admittance, and, therefore, the expedients were resorted to which we have related in the last chapter.

Having made his way from the house by the ingenious contrivance of his intriguing mistress, as before mentioned, by way of the glass-door,

he, knight-errant like, for it was totally dark, passed through the shady laurel-walk, recollecting the moon-light conversation that occurred between himself and Mrs. Lovely some months previous; from thence he continued his walk through the well-known avenues of those seductive premises, and scaled the mount or pallisading which formed the boundary of the lady's grounds from the adjoining heath, which he fancied frowned with savage wildness, as if in concert with the dark state of the atmosphere that surrounded our hero when making his escape from the palace of Urganda. A degree of enchantment or magic influence seemed perpetually to surround our hero: he may have always been considered in a state of fever or heat of the mental faculties, the various evolutions of his fertile brain perpetually presenting fresh images. In the prospect he entertained of reclaiming her who was really irreclaimable, or rendering society a service by her annihilation or removal, he may have been compared to a personification of Sisyphus, always rolling the stone up hill; so our hero could never bring things to that precise state of rationality

and reasoning which he had pictured to his mind of a good woman. If Don Quixote combated windmills, our hero combated the fancies and vagaries of his own creation, for, with all his hatred of her ill actions, he was nevertheless inwardly possessed of an idea that she was a good woman, or that she would become one by reforming agreeable to the rules the Reverend Dr. Allworthy had laid down for the repentant sinner, previous to the communication of Ardent with the reverend gentleman. It is true Dr. Allworthy had in some degree undeceived him as to the actual kind of woman he had formed such an erroneous opinion of ; but as all lovers are said to be somewhat blind to the imperfections of their mistresses, so, in like manner, was Ardent found not to be deficient in that essential and most requisite credence of all faith, that his Dulcinea was, had been, or would be immaculate—it was a strange prepossession, but so it was, and luckily for the village and his own peace and quietness, he went on proving by degrees that she was not to be the lady his own imagination had pictured to himself, but eventually disclosed herself to be

precisely the individual which the Reverend Dr. Allworthy had described her, even two years before the crisis arrived which made her known.

His exclamation, upon arriving at his own house, was, "Thank God, I am once again safe out of that fairy land, or region of perpetual vicissitudes of both the cold and hot stages of infatuation and disquietude. It was like the escape of a thief in the night, or anything but that of an ardent lover from the presence of his charmer. It has been said, past pleasures we are sure of, while those that are to come we may be disappointed in, which is true enough; "those I have enjoyed," said Ardent, "can never be recalled from me, but the balance of accounts is to come: the retribution I have to apprehend will be severe—as I have enjoyed myself in some degree, so, in like manner, I have now to make up my mind for a reaction upon past felicity; and as the reverend doctor seems to insinuate I am a lost young man, if such, I shall present a warning to others; but if successful in making a reformation of this pretty seductive woman, what then? I cannot marry her, as there will still be the mys-

tery of the uncle, besides the remembrance of her past misconduct; and the fates, or Divine Providence, may interpose, as not to suffer her to become reclaimed or fully known until the final vengeance of God Almighty has descended upon her, if not upon myself."

The various interpretations or interpolations of the last evening's extraordinary occurrences, may be now related as they appeared to our hero on the following morning. He traced back the whole transaction, dwelt minutely on some particulars, and generalized on others; but the tendency was to impress upon his mind that he had been bewitched, that it was a dream, that it could not be possible his immaculate penitent and fairy Magdalene was seen or heard in the presence of a man, and the nature of their subject was such as to imply, if not to convince him, it had for its purport or basis an amatory tendency.

"I could fancy," said our hero, "that I heard the wisdom of a magician engaged in allaying the destructive propensities of an enchantress;" and again he would say, "Is it possible or probable, in the jargon I heard, that they could be seeking

to unite the loves and graces, and paying a court to each other in a language unknown to any but themselves. If so, Cupid must be a very Proteus-like deity indeed, to assume different characters and attributes and be perfect in them all, and yet be the same individual, however disguised, speaking so many languages and using symbols for words as among the ancient Egyptians—now in the character of a philosopher, then as a poet, then an astronomer, again as a man of war, presently appearing in the form of an uncle, again as a Parliament man—it puzzled the brains of Ardent to keep pace with his various properties, allegorical if not diabolical, upon some occasions. But such were all lovers' fears, he thought, in the regions of enchantment, and particularly within the circle of that magic zone, called a female's honour, or the chastity of woman.

To record the influence of woman over the sensibilities and tender attachments of men, is nothing new,—it has been admitted from all ages, and will subsist and exist to the end of time ; but it is not surprising that there should be so little on record, rather than there should be so much, for the passion of infatuation, once depicted, may be

said to be always pictured, making due allowances for its variety in the excess of duration and other characteristics, extraordinary minds being extraordinarily acted upon, or excited to those impulsive feelings of attraction and repulsion which constitute the difference between the sensibilities of one man, and the common instinctive properties of thousands,—nay, millions, comprehended under the common title of love and love-making. Sometimes he was inclined to believe he heard a fair Circassian, with the manners of the east, receive her lesson with infinite satisfaction from one of her country's ancient sages, or magi. It was in this sort of feverish dream he passed the following day, being under considerable excitement, not so much by a wish to injure the lady as to reclaim her by all the milder means of reason, ratiocination, or conversational intercourse; in truth, an attempt to realize her own phantasy, that of proving how far an intercourse could subsist between the sexes, called Platonic love, without actually uniting their persons with their opinions; an ideal or visionary existence, it must be admitted, with those who loved so ardently as our hero. The idea of Platonic love first of all

originated with herself, but then it was a secret moving spring for the purpose of battering down principles, and preconceived notions of propriety, which the inexperienced Ardent being unapprised of, readily fell into her snare, like a fly laying hold of a line of the spider's web to extricate itself from an inconvenience, and is sure to be the more ensnared, if not finally destroyed.

Platonic love, or female friendship, admits a near and familiar intercourse of the sexes by approximation, yet not actual contact. A nameless interchange of trifling offices renders the illusion agreeable enough for a time; but soon the silly bird is caught by the fowler in his net, while he thought he was only chirping to amuse his female companion—this is love of the ardent kind. They meet, they converse, they interchange sentiments, opinions; desire follows next—what is admired is wished to be possessed—the heart beats with violence—the passions are inflamed—the wily siren perceives the influence she has over her victim—she is too sensible of the advantage to apprise him of his danger, and he thus rushes headlong down the precipice of infuriated passion and despair. Thousands and tens of thousands,—

nay, millions, are caught in this way. Reflection comes afterwards, it is then commonly too late,—the deed has been done—the parental counsel has been disregarded—the young lady who would have made an excellent wife, has been slighted—and what remains to be done, but what was done in this instance, become the village remembrancers—in after life endeavouring to be the world's monitors, to guard other Telemachus's from being ensnared by the Calypso's of succeeding ages.

It was thus that Ardent interchanged sentiments and ideas with himself, being perpetually at war in his own mind for his folly, simplicity, and the degraded station he held in his own eyes, which conviction never left him, but constantly upbraided him for being this woman's tool, unless indeed when he sometimes relented; then he would think of her with all the tenderness of the most endearing solicitude, and think he could hazard even life itself to save her.

Such are the irregularities of a misguided passion, when directed to an improper object, for no one could justify either one or the other in the extravagant resentments which followed. No female could have acted with more violence and

outrage to the man who attempted to prevent her ruining herself whether she would or not.

Further proof is to come, thought Ardent. "I must risk one more conversation with her: what the next incidents will be, it is impossible to say, neither will I fatigue myself by anticipation. But the Reverend Dr. Allworthy most solemnly assures me, that ruin to herself and disgrace to me will certainly be the consequence of a further acquaintance, or even a slight knowledge of her. Now, if I can but arrest the will of fate, which may perhaps have marked her for its prey, I shall do her an acceptable service."

The doubt that exists in my mind will be soon cleared up, as I take nothing for granted either in morals or physics, but examine for myself, and scrutinize as closely into the arcanum of the human passions and imperfections in morals, as in those of nature, and certainly with equal zeal to that of an alchymist in the olden time, when he spent the best part of his time in search after the philosopher's stone, and which stone, the Reverend Dr. Allworthy says, will surely break my own head, and also the lady's, and ruin both our fortunes. And

he further says : “ that she is a lost woman beyond the power of control,—that such women never change at her age, but make a mockery of all things sacred, whether of human or divine institutions.”

I say to myself, “ how came the Reverend Dr. Allworthy informed of these things, but by intuition, or from the experience, observations, and remarks of other men, both in modern times and those remote, for the antients transmitted their experience down to us, which are treasures of the understanding, far exceeding the wealth of the Indies, and surpassing in value the jewels of Golconda.

“ Solomon has many wise sayings relating to harlots in his proverbs, so Dr. Allworthy remarks ; but may not ladies of the present day who are easy in their virtue, differ in their improvements from the harlots of remote time, and be at last persuaded to live a life of seclusion, free from scandal, and become examples of piety, penitence, honour, and virtue ?

“ It will now very soon be proved, that the Reverend Dr. Allworthy is perfectly right, in regard

to this lady's character, and that I am in the wrong, or the contrary; and that this woman is not so hopeless and lost to all sense of shame, as my respectable friend insists upon,—nay, so strenuously, as almost to carry conviction that he speaks the truth.

“I will now take a few days for consideration, before I move one step further in this business, lest by precipitancy I spoil all in my endeavours to accomplish the alleged impracticability before the proper time. I wish to give her time to reflect and be the grateful woman, or at least the civil one, she ought to be, rather than she should realize the Doctor's *ipse dixit* concerning her.”

The mind of Ardent wavered to and fro, like an agitated multitude of conflicting sentiments; each appeared to be struggling within him for the mastery, either to save her in her perilous situation, or desert her, and see her perish as a victim to misguided passion, and perchance ill-advised and injudicious counsels—from mistaken friends or designing enemies.

With this disturbed and perturbed state of his reflective faculties, he retired to his own pillow,

there to meditate still further on the transitions of the past, and the mutability of the future.

With such troubled thoughts he retired to rest, but not to sleep, or if nature obtained repose, it was of a disturbed character ; the moments of re-awakened sensibility were the periods of painful anxiety, the consequent attendants on infatuation.

CHAPTER III.

IN a few days, our hero summoned up resolution enough to put the lady upon her trial, or rather was so infatuated as to call again to see what effect the communication he had made to the Reverend Dr. Allworthy by letter had had upon her, and as he had gone great lengths to redeem her character with the reverend gentlemen, or, at the least, had risked his own to prevent active measures being taken against her, he naturally expected he should meet with the smile of welcome, although, perhaps, attended with some reproof for the hastiness of his first communication with the reverend divine. But, as inconsiderate and thoughtless people follow the bent of their own inclination, rather than adhere to sound advice, he received a well-merited reception and treatment, which opened his eyes effectually.

Ardent, upon knocking at the hall-door, as usual, was let in by his fair mistress of the mansion, and as soon as they were seated, she began

the conversation, by saying: "Now, Ardent, finish what you have to communicate to me, that I may be at least apprised of my danger, or what I have to hope from your interposition?"

"I have done as you required," was the reply; "and the Reverend Dr. Allworthy is very angry with me, for interfering and arresting the progress of his resentment against you, saying it was very ill-judged of me to stop that benefit which might have been derived by the public, from the communication made to him, and eventually, that the full weight of the inconvenience and injury I did the public would fall upon myself, which I have braved,—nay, risked all but my reputation for veracity to save you."

"You have done, then, as you promised me you would—wrote the letter I required of you, and this has been his answer?"

"Precisely so. I made even the communication itself doubtful, so that you are no longer in his power, and your future behaviour will, I hope, convince him, that although you have been in an error, there is considerable expectation to be entertained that you will reform, and give to all the prospect of seeing you a respectable lady, and

not making fresh sacrifices of simple young men at your shrine.—I wish I could call it the shrine of virtue, but it is deserving of a harsher name, and I am too considerate to your feelings to wound them again unnecessarily.”

“ You have, then, wrote the letter you said you would?”

“ Yes, I have indeed, and I have called down upon myself the angry feelings of that good man, for interposing between you and the public, as he terms it ; and, furthermore he assures me with great earnestness, I am a lost young man, unless I speedily reform.”

“ Thank God, my character is now safe,—I am now satisfied ; and now, sir, you shall hear the communication I have to make to you. You have proved yourself a villain, both to me and the Reverend Dr. Allworthy.”

Ardent looked aghast, but recovering his speech, said—“ Rather say, fair lady, I have been indiscreet, through my fondness for you, and that I have now done my utmost to redeem you, at the hazard of my own reputation for veracity—for evasions of truth are nearly allied to falsehoods.”

“ Now leave my house—my character is safe, and I will break up all acquaintance with you, or any belonging to you,—your divine and yourself may go together—and you are very proper company for each other.”

“ A little more gratitude, Mrs. Freelove,—nay, even common civility, would have been as well, if not answered your purpose better.

“ Would it not have been preferable to have said—Ardent, you are a young man, excessively attached to me, which has brought us both into great inconvenience—we will, if you please, break off the acquaintance and try what time and absence may effect, in restoring you and myself to our usual serenity ; you have done me an injury, a vital injury, but that I will overlook, as it has proceeded from jealousy, and an excess of infatuation or regard for me, which should be moderated by absence, and therefore, I request you will take your leave in a gentleman-like manner, and not expose me again to your resentments and caprice, and we will endeavour at a distance to respect each other, and hope for happiness in future, away from the society of each other. Brighter prospects may then appear in the horizon of our

temporal welfares, and we may meet again under more congenial situations than now, while the dark clouds of an inclement sky are lowering over both of us, and the thundering elements are about to peal in our ears a dreadful malediction, denoting the wrath of God to offending mortals. We have too late found out, that we are of different ways of thinking—you are for perfections which I cannot and do not pretend to, therefore reserve your love for those congenial to you in thinking and acting, and we will part friends, perhaps mutually regretting that we had ever met, and think that a further continuation of the acquaintance could not be productive of either permanent happiness or transient felicity.

“ Had you uttered such sentiments as these, they would have done your heart and mind credit, and I should have withdrawn contented with having saved the remains of virtue, if not virtue itself, under the garb of a temporary domino of inconsiderate propensities, baneful in their operations, and dreadful in their after consequences. Or you might have said, ‘ Ardent, you are a young man with headstrong passions, and, through your outrageous impetuosity and anger,

have involved yourself and me in difficulties of an unpardonable character, and which will be attended with considerable inconvenience to both, unless we speedily amend our lives. You have done your best, and I am thankful for this proof of your gratitude to my former friendship; time and accident must in future prove our sentiments towards each other—at present, they are in a fair train, and we will hope the best; in the interim, it will be necessary to break off our former intimacy: you look after a wife, and I will take care of my own affairs, without requiring your services again as my lord chamberlain; and thus we will part, with mutual good wishes for each other's health, happiness, and prosperity. I shall be glad to hear of your welfare as a former friend and old acquaintance, and you will be glad to hear of my living a respectable and reputable life in future, without the necessity of calling upon you to interpose your good offices with the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, or any other individual in my behalf.

“Such reasoning and argumentation, fair lady, would have been very much to the purpose, and more congenial to the soothing of angry feelings

on both sides, and I could not have been offended at my dismissal, for it was what I was about to propose, to add to your respectability and my own tranquillity. Or, you might have banished me for three months until the whole was blown over, as a lover's quarrel, and by that time other affairs would have occupied the Reverend Dr. Allworthy's attention. The village would have forgot that you were no longer patroness of the Sunday School, and my active mind might have been again called upon to assist in sustaining your respectability with the public, and you might then have employed me as your prime minister—to have directed you by my counsel, and assisted you by my judgment, and also helped you to outface the dreadful wrath of that good man, the Reverend Dr. Allworthy. Then all he could have brought against you, you would have been able to have overcome with tolerable consistency, the while you retained me as your friend, and you would gradually and almost imperceptibly have recovered your lost station in society, scarcely knowing that you had lost it, even for a short time only. Such an able director and dictator is what you require in the present state and emergency of your affairs,

which are drawing to a climax, unless speedily and promptly prevented, agreeable to the Reverend Dr. Allworthy's prediction ; and if you assist to verify the same by evil conduct, or by attending to weak counsellors, instead of those more calculated to direct you, and who wish you well—you are a lost woman. Such is the fatality, I fearfully apprehend, awaits you. Perhaps you consider as your friends some cunning foxes, who will devour your substance, or, like wolves in sheep's clothing, prey, not only upon your person, but your fortune also. Remember the fable of the shepherd's dog and the wolf: the silly sheep was persuaded by the wolf, or some cunning knave, to dismiss the watch-dog ; to make the more impression, I will call this watch-dog your old friend and lover, Ardent ; the sheep did as they were advised, by their evil counsellors, which silly sheep you may apply to yourself, and the lamb to your son. The dog Ardent being dismissed, the foxes and wolves rushed in upon her and her pet lamb, and devoured them both—and so will your evil counsellors eventually destroy, not only you and your son, but all that you possess, as the event will prove ; and the Reverend Dr. Allworthy predicts the same in

nearly the same words. Such, I hope, fair lady, will not be your case, and yet I have a strong presentiment you will be destroyed; for this abrupt dismissal of me is anything but lady-like to an ardent lover, who has loved you to distraction, and whose sorrows, when absent from you, and none hear him, volumes would not contain.

“ You have been my Hero, and I have been your Leander. It is true, I have not crossed the Hellespont in your cause, but I have passed the rubicon called discretion, and have dared as Cæsar dared, when he smuggled Cleopatra to his arms.

“ Almost any other speech you might have made to me, equally honourable to your feelings, creditable to yourself, and respectful to me, for I have thought you no common woman, but a superior character, and a woman who deserved my utmost gratitude and devotion. The last I have recently proved in your cause, for what I had done was provoked by your own want of consideration for my feelings, but finding you repented, I rushed forward to the brink of the precipice to save you, and arrived just in time to prevent your fall down into the dreadful chasm

or gulf from which there is no return, but with a lost reputation, life, or fortune,—for when Providence begins to frown, his extreme anger must be apprehended, and by supplication and prayers appeased, or the dreaded consequences of his mighty wrath are to be expected, and great is the overthrow—whether of individuals or nations, for sickly unhealthy principles are good for neither man, woman, or communities.

“ I ventured thus far to save you, and your most gracious language is :—‘ Turn out, my character is safe, and now I defy you ;’ and that in the most uncourtly accents, as if you were under the influence of demoniacal counsel. Before I embarked in the affair of letter-writing, which was to retrieve you, I cautioned you to keep your temper—some malign spirits must dread the former influence I had over you, and thus urge you onwards to your destruction, that you may fall a more easy prey into their arms. I informed you, before I placed pen to paper, for it was a serious affair with me, that I would bring you off those shoals on which your little gay bark was stranded. The utmost ingenuity was exercised in your cause, —I lashed your vessel to my own, and removed

you from that destruction that awaited you, and if you were not entirely uninjured, it was in consequence of a deviation from my counsel; and now you are safely arrived in port, once again under my convoy, you drive me from you, although I have not materially injured you, neither is your happiness considerably deteriorated—but mine you regard as of no importance, and therefore cast it from you. The termination will be as the reverend divine predicted.”

“ Well, sir, proceed, if there is any further speech you may have to make. You should have been an orator in the house, or at the bar at the least; even the Reverend Dr. Allworthy himself does not equal you in the originality of your defence for tarnishing with shame my sacred person and divine perfections: so now for the speech, the speech;—I like to hear you talk, although I hate the occasion, for I once loved you with such tenderness of affection, that I have lost my happiness through it, for I was then a happy individual, and now I am miserable.”

“ And so am I, madam, for you were the pride of my heart, and in you was planted with religious zeal the fondest of my affections; they were all

centered in you, as I think I have more than once proved. With all the energy of my mind, and with such devotedness as would have convinced any woman but yourself, that my regard for you partook of no ordinary pretensions to gallantry, but a dedication of the heart and soul, as would have secured me, I expected, a remembrance among your foibles,—and that you would not thus slight my partiality to you, by forbidding me your house.”

“ Go on, Ardent, for your eloquence is amusing, but I scorn your intercession to be admitted to my favour.”

“ Mistake not, madam, the motives of my intercession, or appeal to your consideration this day. It is not to oblige myself so particularly, but to prove my devotion still to your cause—and yours only, that you may not become the prey of harpies, and that your want of wisdom might be supplied by my firm belief in the good resulting from moral conduct; for where the aim is good, the baneful consequences must desert their hold, which would attach to those who disregard all attention to those laws and regulations of society, called human and divine.”

“Bravo, sir knight errant! all you can say is in vain,—your friendship on any terms is disregarded, and will be rejected with scorn by me. I am not only an injured woman, but an enraged one, from the loss of the Sunday’s school, and despise you in proportion to the mortification I have undergone, and am likely to undergo, on your account, and yours only; and I am now resolved, as my character is safe, to spurn you from me, and with that indignation that no conciliation of yours, however humiliating, can appease.”

“I believe, fair madam, I have but one more speech, as you term it, to produce, and having given you every chance of becoming a respectable woman, I must then positively take my leave, and when I see you again, it will be under widely different auspices; perhaps then sorry for your ungracious dismissal of me this day, who have been hitherto your faithful swain. The broad surface of this widely extended forest we have frequently explored together, as through the regions of enchantment, and when we have returned to your bowers of voluptuousness, you were then soft, kind, and soothing. I was then your Damon, and you were then my Phillis the fair. But those times

are now passed away, and the adverse fates are now fast pursuing us both, possibly to our destruction, as the Reverend Dr. Allworthy has represented to me, and confirmed by the most decisive inferences—little short of demonstration, which you are now about to realize, as a practical fact, that will be no longer doubted.”

“ Ardent, your love-stories, your riddles, your fables, and your representation of ordinary occurrences in life resemble the fictions of the poets, or philosophical treatises upon important matters, while they serve to amuse me, bring back to my recollection past felicity, and those agreeable hours I formerly passed in your society; but now, alas! those hours, days, and weeks, can never return—it is too late to call yesterday back—the blow has been struck—you have endeavoured to sacrifice me in your anger, and all that remains for me now to do is, to make you feel the whole weight of my resentment.”

“ Matchless lady, frail as fair, you have most profoundly spoken the angry feelings of your heart, with all the wrath of an ancient sybil, who denounced the fate of individuals and nations with the like indifference to future consequences. No

oracular denunciation from the angry deities could be half so malign as your unkind sentences this day—relent and recall back your decree ere it is too late, and, lest you again rouse those angry sensibilities within me which have proclaimed you an enemy to man, and then rescinded at your request. You have overthrown those milder graces of your mind, which now, I apprehend, are for ever deserting you, and which made you estimable as a companion and prepared your conquest over me as a woman.”

“ All you can say, most sage sir, can never restore to me the patronage of the Sunday School, and for depriving me of a part of my reputation for sanctity of manners, I will do all I can to destroy you : the Circean bowl you have yet to partake of—do you think you are to receive extravagant felicity without the alloy ? the day of retribution is at hand to both.”

“ Madam, you have displayed this day a depth of angry feeling beyond the possibility of supposing could be produced by such causes ; by your maledictions you are no longer a desirable mistress to any man, but an angry fiend in the most dreadful of all acceptations of the word, that of

attempting to destroy the victim who is risking, at the peril of his own fortunes, to uphold both yours and your son's respectability; and have only required the extraordinary boon, as it seems to be, that you would grant the privilege of a former friend to give you counsel from time to time, lest, by the impetuosity of your own conduct, you should destroy yourself and your son with you. But I will endeavour to reason with you upon this affair once again, and present you with the opportunity of answering me as you may think proper, or rather I will answer for you. I think I have one already prepared in the repository of my mind, which I will deliver with the best grace imaginable, but not to be compared in effect with words proceeding from your own pretty lips, which have been rarely exceeded, if ever, by any individual I have been hitherto acquainted with."

"Very well, Mr. Impudence."

"Rather say, madam, Imprudence—apologising for interrupting you."

"It is not so well then, Mr. Imprudence; did you ever know a woman deficient in speech before?"

"Never, madam, if you mean by speech words,

but not words that convey such important meanings as you now give utterance to. But I am rude to interrupt you, and, therefore, am become an attentive listener."

"No, sir, I will not be urged to speak sentiments that are foreign to my meaning and my intentions; therefore, you may proceed as you please."

"Your favour, madam, of suffering me to be your representative for a short period, will be appreciated by myself with every feeling of consideration and due importance, as the subject in debate between us may seem to require."

"With this proviso, imprudent sir, as you have called yourself, that you never henceforth speak of women engrossing the whole conversation to themselves, for in a wordy warfare I believe there is not an old woman in the parish who could equal you."

"And, madam, it is well you do not stand in the same relative situation with an old woman, for then, indeed, there would be an end of all argumentation or argumentative reasoning; for I would leave the dispute undecided, thinking I did an old lady of doubtful character too much

honour to hear long stories from her, and still less be inclined to relate them for her amusement and diversion : but you are the princess of this fairy bower, and, somehow or other, lead the senses captive, and, I may say, the judgment too is enslaved by your soft persuasions, or I had never written that formidable letter to the Reverend Dr. Allworthy. So now, madam, if you please, having brought our discourse back to the subject in debate, I will begin your speech, but as we are upon a serious subject, I will treat it in a serious manner ; for I plainly perceive my garrulity gives you uneasiness, which is plainly indicated by those frowning pretty eyebrows, which are the true pictures of the sorrows of your heart, or the angry feelings still engendered or instilled into your sensibilities by some individuals of rancorous hatred to myself, and who, perhaps, may have fancied the dividing of two former friends is the only way to secure you in their interest, and that, consequently, the more you can be excited against myself the more you are likely to regard them ; so that, not knowing your friends from your foes, you are eventually overthrown."

“The speech, Ardent, and not loquacity of words, like the prating of a parrot, a starling, or a magpie.”

“You shall be obeyed, madam, in as few words as possible ; and, since you will not take upon yourself the character of your sex, I will do the honours of it, with your permission, for a short time only.”

“You have my free permission, and I shall thereby judge how you acquit yourself, no doubt, to the satisfaction of your friend Ardent.”

“Which you, madam, should do me the honour to represent, and thus heal, if possible, the reciprocal feuds of discord and tergiversation.”

“Begin, sir, begin ; I shall still prefer to represent the dignity of my sex, and its spotless innocence.”

“Then I will be your advocate, madam, and represent you as you should be upon this important occasion, for it is a subject fraught with great consequences to the parties ; and I will apply the impromptu of Edward the Third, when he was seen stooping to pick up a lady’s garter in a ball-room—‘*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*’

“Proceed, sir,—this is trifling, and I am not

in a mood to be bantered; a woman's anger is not easy to be appeased, and if you succeed it is more than I expect.—So, sir, you may begin.”

“ There is no alternative, madam, and I am acquiescent—now, then:—You have always been, Ardent, from my earliest acquaintance with you, a lover of mine; even from the time I first gave you an opportunity of conversing with me, I could perceive your eyes glisten with delight at the pleasing appearance before you, for I saw you were in extasy that so beautiful a woman should have honoured you with attention so as to have sent for you to her house under the pretence of a visit to her son, who was alleged to be the sick patient, but, alas! it was myself, for my heart palpitated to behold you near me, to hear you converse, and feed your expectancy with the promised delays of heart-felt rapture; for, indeed, I was gratified with your attention, and intended to have retained you in the perpetual bonds of unsubstantial gratification, when I heard of your being about to marry my rival, an amiable woman, and who would have made you permanently happy. This was too great a triumph for the modesty of virtue to accomplish over me; I pretended fits to

secure you near my person, as to engage nearly the whole of your time ; finding that I was still insecure, and that my rival might gain a victory over me, I planned the invitation for you to call upon me when I was alone. From that time you have been only mine ; but you became jealous that I should admit others to the same favour, and, consequently, rebelled against me and proclaimed me—was that fair ? but I forgive you, and we will be friends at a distance. I will reform from the error of my ways, and injure no person, either man or maid, wife or widow, in future ; and I will benefit society by ceasing to aim at further conquests, for I have already made too many, and will no longer be injurious to the morals of the rising generation.”

“ A very pretty speech, indeed, Mr. Self-Sufficient ; but you have not represented the graces, the winning manners, the sparkling of the eyes, you have admired so much in me, and the rays of those long eyelashes which you have compared to the radiance of the setting sun in all its glory, when it bids adieu to an admiring world. You were my setting sun, and retired to rest to meet the inconstant moon that welcomed you to her

couch ; it was then, with the birth of day, when Aurora awoke the skies, you stole from the embrace, and now reflect upon me for your enjoyments."

" You bring to my recollection, madam, time that has passed away with two great rapidity indeed ; but the truth is, it would have been better for both that neither one had seen the other ; then recrimination could not have taken place, nor could the language of admiration and esteem have been the source of regret. I may further say, had I told a direct falsehood, it would have been an injury to both, as I should have been less esteemed among men, as well as deserving of universal execration ; besides, myself being an aider and abettor, must have suffered eventually those inconveniences ever the consequence of deception. Furthermore, dear madam, you might have said, we have been unfortunate friends,—therefore, can be friends no longer ; you have, by your communication to the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, dissolved the social bands, and we must, in time to come, be entirely strangers to each other, with the remembrance only of our former regards ; at the same time bearing in

mind that I shall always esteem you as one of my fondest admirers, and although the most impetuous and ardent of lovers, yet the most fickle of friends, and, moreover, the most jealous and resentful; and, as there will be danger in time to come of my deviating from your entire will and pleasure, I renounce my allegiance to your sovereignty, or, rather, sultan-like authority or control over my inclinations or affections in future; and, therefore, relinquish your friendship and acquaintance, in the expectation that it will be attended with the most happy auspices to both. So let us resolve never to meet again, but part in peace with mutual good wishes for each other's happiness."

"Well done, lecturer! will you never have done your long harangues? do you think I have the patience to listen to you as the Parliament members did to Pitt, Fox, Sheridan, and Burke, on the causes of good and evil, which concern not me or any of my way of thinking; or on the balance of power in Europe, as equalizing and protecting the weak against the strong, and adjusting those punctilios or peccadillos which distract the courts of modern Europe—as who

is chief favourite to-day and who was yesterday. In short, I wish you to understand, Mr. Ardent, that I am the arbitress of my own fate or destiny —my character is now restored, I care not by what means or by what sacrifice, or how attained ; 'tis enough for me to know that I am now safe, and I defy your insinuation that you can be of any further use to me or my son. But this I do know, that you have been ungrateful for past civilities, and I now order you from my house and from the presence of an injured, innocent, and abused woman."

"Bravo, Mrs. Freelove! you improve admirably ; your zeal, I think, in this hurried defiance, is a little in the excess : more calmness would have been preferable to this hasty ebullition, from which no good can be produced, and abundance of mischief may result, not from your resentment alone, although very considerable, but mine also is to be dreaded ; for I came here for the purpose of making peace-offerings to the manes of your angry and perturbed spirits ; accordingly, was prepared to meet with some rebuke, but not with excessive anger and resentment. Either I only am to blame or both of us, or you singly and in-

dividually, and I have too much consideration for the softer sex still remaining to imply they can err alone; therefore, I am willing to take upon myself a part of the '*onus probandi*' of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy's displeasure, and assert myself your champion and defender, as far as consistency and honour will permit me: at the same time, with a due respect to the safeguard of other individuals who are not as yet parties in the fray—I mean the yet unseduced who may become votaries to your intemperate zeal for licentiousness of principle and perversion of conduct; in fact, there is a secret influence by which you hold the male part of the creation your subjects, while virtuous ladies remain indignant but passive spectators of your matchless impudence and boundless efforts to levy admiration, not only from the single but the married man."

"Do you mean to provoke me, Mr. Ardent, beyond all endurance?"

"By no means, madam: I only wish to convince you that you are in part known; your ways have been hitherto past finding out, but the Reverend Dr. Allworthy has discovered your secret, and will, no doubt, make the most of it; he cannot

do much at the present time, because I have impeded the progress he intended to make in denouncing you; therefore, be calm, nor boast too much with arrogant presumption of your immaculate purity. Be calm, steady, and silent; in fact, be not your own enemy, but, as a stronger mind than yours has, by exposing your evil conduct, brought you into trouble, the same mind would good-naturedly have undertaken to extricate you from it, if not interrupted by ingratitude or abusive conduct, for in such case the tables are turned, the sluice-gates are let loose, and you are swept away down the current of oblivion."

"Admirably argued, most potent sir; from whence did you derive all the plenitude of your admirable tactics? was it from the great Frederick, or Cæsar's Commentaries, or Tacitus, Livy, Lucan, or from what other source?"

"Stop, madam, not quite so fast; I know very well what you would say,—cunning is preferable to principle, but that is not a suitable subject for the present discussion. Bonaparte may be brave and have great qualities, and yet be a mere instrument in the hands of the Almighty to teach

pride humility, and kings that have been supposed to be headstrong, yokestrong—that is, submissive to his decrees ;—as the strongest minds govern the weakest, so all ought to be careful that their principles will bear the test of truth and the examination of reflection.”

“ Forbear, nor tease me again with your quidnuncs and quiddities ; a truce with your sententious speechifying, as if every sentence, word, and thought was suspended in the balance of your judgment, and ready for delivery to the first person requiring your counsel, your aid and assistance, or your denunciation, as a mighty man of wrath, bringing to my recollection the man who slew his thousands and his tens of thousands.”

“ By the digressive manner in which you argue the affair, madam, with the most playful, sarcastic, or satirical irony, I begin to have hopes that you are too well informed to be entirely depraved or profligate, for to be vicious is to be ignorant, and the slave of the passions also wicked in increasing (to make use of your own metaphors) the numbers of the spoils or the slain, whether by a laxity of morals or the sword is the same thing,

and realizes Sampson's figure of speech, when it is said in Scripture, with the jaw-bone of an ass he slew his thousands, by which is typified that through his opinions he slew or converted to his way of thinking his thousands, and, at his death, his tens of thousands, confirming those opinions as our Saviour did by his decease ; converting more to his way of thinking after his death than during his life—at least, in the same proportion of ten to one, and since, perhaps, many millions to one unit. But enough of this : reverent subjects must not be treated with the irreverent, or the profane with the more solid principles of life, as those of religious axioms, called Christian principles. Let the holy things remain with themselves, discussion of principles and the practice of morals with theirs, or ridicule will apply, if not attach very improperly to where it is not intended to adhere. Neither are the Holy Scriptures, nor any part thereof, of a serious description, intended to be animadverted or improperly reflected upon in any way injurious to religion, morals, or virtue ; for sarcasm may apply to politics, but not to religion. But to return to our subject of debate—I would fain believe, lady,”

said Ardent, "that I am an ancient moralist or philosopher, Socrates, for instance, disputing with Aspasia on the propriety or impropriety of her conduct in attempting to seduce the young, the middle-aged, and the more grave grey-beards, who should be better employed than setting an ill example to the young by giving countenance to ladies of a certain definite description, which common politeness forbids me to name in the presence of that earthly divinity to whom so many have bent the knee in token of their subjection, not to the cause of virtue but the profanation of moral principle."

"To please you, whimsical sir, I will strive to represent the character of Aspasia, although she was a learned lady and the friend of Pericles, the ruler of the Athenian people, then the most learned and memorable in the world: so begin your address, Mr. Pericles, and I will give you a hearing."

"Very well, madam.—The nature of my appeal, O, Aspasia the fair, is, that you will take into consideration the moral rectitude of this little republic, which we will call, for distinction sake, the village of Athens, or an Athenian vil-

lage ; for henceforth surely it may be looked upon as classic ground, where so many principles have been discussed, all tending to religion, morals, and virtue. I now stand before you as a pre-eminent example of the influence of infatuation and the prevalence of your charms over every moral virtue and rectitude of the heart. The heart and mind are at civil war one with the other in the same frame ; the head says, do this, follow the counsel of Plato, while the heart says, worship Aspasia still, and be subservient to her caprice, which is also the counsel of Epicurus. Now which, fair madam, would be the most acceptable to your divine perfections ?”

“ Neither of them, sage Mr. Ardent, alias Socrates, alias Pericles ; nor can I offer you a continuance of the friendship of Aspasia, who is too confirmed in the habits of the past to be expected to reform in the future, and devote her attentions to you alone ? Aspasia has not a heart to give, her bosom is the property of the public.”

“ Most admirably well argued, fair lady,—a decision worthy of your great abilities, most exquisite charms of person, graces of mind, and accomplished address. But such is the impor-

tance of your decision, that I could yet wait your answer from sunrise to sunset, and that with pleasure, rather than you should decide too hastily. But now I find, too late, alas ! for my peace, that my reasonings are in vain against the arguments you adduce, that my heroism and defence of real truths have been treated with all the negligence and inattention, if not perfect indifference, due only to the mock heroics on the stage, and not to the real occurrences of life of a tragi-comic nature. May the future, then, Aspasia, prove only the effusions of the comic muse, which my dread forebodings will not suffer me to anticipate, but, on the contrary, the very worst of calamities that can afflict human nature, or that ever was recorded in tragic history. Think, oh ! think, before it is too late, that you see in me an instrument of Omnipotence, who thus calls you to account for your misdeeds in seducing sons, fathers, husbands, brothers, all the relations of consanguinity of the male kind ; and have equally distressed the hearts and minds of their female relatives ; can you view the wreck of hearts broken in your service and by your decrees ? Think you that Omnipotence will let you prosper, and thus

triumph over the infirmities of your hapless victims?—You'll find he will not,—a holy man confirms it: 'I cannot serve God and mammon,' are his pious words, and in them is conveyed a warning voice from heaven, requiring you to repent the error of your ways, and sin no more. Think, before it is too late, you see in me the tragic muse, forewarning you of your fate, for indeed you will be, unless you relent, one of the unhappiest daughters of Eve that ever graced the page of histrionic narration. And you will then discover that I have spoken the truth, although it surpasses the power of language to convey a hundredth part of the sufferings that you will then experience, when you have lost your Pericles, or Ardent's zeal and capacity to protect you by his able counsel."

"Very fine, sir, truly, and now hear me: I dare you to do your worst, since you have assumed such a solemn and sacred character—I brave you, and will to the last gasp. And let me, oh, heaven! but live in the memory of mankind, and I will gladly foreclose this my wretched life, made so, indeed, by the falsest villain that ever betrayed a woman's love; for to you it was no trifling

love, but the genuine effervescence of the heart and mind, that would have exceeded the bounds of nature if it could, or the heavenly powers of Cupid, the god of love, had been invoked to facilitate still more daring acts of union, as of soul to soul, as well as heart to heart; when the passions would have rivalled the fabled loves of Jupiter, who bore Europa, the daughter of Agenor, king of Argos, on his back, across the Hellespont to the Gardens of the Hesperides."

"Then, fair enslaver, you will have your wish: you have preferred immortality in immorality, to peace and tranquillity on earth by practising the moral virtues. I have been your slave—O, ye gods! how I have tugged the oar in your service, —no galley slave could have strained his heart-strings to the core as I have done to please the queen of love and beauty. You have been my queen of love and beauty: with gentle gales of amorous sighs and dalliance I have fanned you to repose; or by conflicting passions, worthy of the warrior's love when contending for renown in the fields of glory, I have sought your return of love, when every favour was a foretaste of immortality, or realizing the joys of Mohammed's para-

dise. In such rencontres we have often met, striving for the mastery, who should the victor prove and grace the brows with flowers as at an hymeneal festival, or as when the loves and graces united their influence to prepossess each the more. When Venus' self gave the signal propitious to happy lovers, we advanced to the combat, not as gladiators in an arena, no, but to such exercises of the heart as are incident to love, wine, and pleasure. Is it for these assaults, personal, it is true, and worthy of Jove himself when visiting the daughters of men, that I am now to become a banished man? another Aristides under the ban of ostracism? O, fatal curiosity! O! fatal inquisitiveness and credulity! Could I believe the perfections of my mistress no longer? or rather, I believed in them too much, and introduced, by her desire it is true, a friend, rather say an enemy, for I think plurality in love is damnable. Oh! that I had followed my father's counsel and married a virtuous young lady, and have become her faithful husband instead of being this woman's slave,—she would not now have forsaken me and left me to anguish, repinings, and misery. My heart is

torn asunder, it is no longer whole but rent into ten thousand distractions and perturbations, as was never felt or expressed by man before, deservedly inflicted, it is true, by the hands of Divine Providence, for the neglect given by me to my father, my dear father's parental authority."

"I fear you, Ardent, I dread you, I dare not meet you longer face to face; there is something awful in your virtue; you are so much my superior in moral acquirements, and the general tenour of your conversational powers is so solemn and serious, I dare not compete with you further. You appeared to me as a messenger commissioned by Heaven, to bring me to account for my sins, wickednesses, and transgressions: my life is short, my days are henceforth numbered, and you, Ardent, will be as the avenger of the Lord against me for the sins and wickednesses I have committed in this world."

"Nay, now you are yourself pathetic, and my heart swells almost to bursting while I hear you. Say not again, that I am as an avenger of the Almighty; rather say I am still your protecting friend, and would shield you with my body and

mind, as an ægis appointed by omnipotence to defend you, while you repent of the evil of your ways, and become henceforth respectable, and live long to give an example worthy of your son's following, that he may become an esteemed and honourable man."

"No, Ardent, these tears you see straying down my cheeks are not the consequences of repentance, but the momentary fountains produced by your appeal to my sympathetic affections; for who could hear you unmoved, and not shed tears of sorrow for the happiness that has passed away, and will now, alas, never return; never, never! My resentment is fixed beyond all your control, or the Reverend Dr. Allworthy's either, and you are now speaking to a lioness of the desert, who seeks your destruction; your principles I have long attempted to subdue. It is now your life and fortunes must become a sacrifice to my angry feelings against you; for I will not have it said I could not conquer you by my revenge, and subdue and bring down to my own level your bold and dauntless principles. So, leave me, leave me: a woman's revenge, angered as I have been, is as insatiable as the grave.

Consider me henceforth, Ardent, as a lioness in this wilderness ; or, if you please, a tigress, whose ferocity nothing can equal, to glut the revenge of malice which I bear to you, and you alone, for all my other lovers I could tame to my will and pleasures ; but you brave me to my face, and even to the last are insolent, with your proudly assumed pre-eminence of virtue. Has morality no defender of its cause, that it must select you, my most devoted victim ? and who I had fancied I had the most enslaved ; for to please you I took unusual pains, and it is thus I am rewarded. I have the utmost detestation for those principles that have so powerfully coped with mine. All that now remains to be proved is the mastery : as who shall remain the victor or conqueror of the other in this struggle for annihilation, or rather independence of mind, freed from the control of principles and the frowns and observances of society, inculcated by yourself and the Reverend Dr. Allworthy ; for you are become his satellite, to perform those deeds by me he dare not have done without your assistance. Had it not been for you, I should have endangered the overthrow of his understanding ; for had I not been checked in

my career, and a few years,—nay, a few months, had been longer permitted me, I would have inveigled him also into the meshes of my net, and by entangling the shepherd, as he calls himself, the sheep or his flock would have been at my mercy.”

“ You are angry, lady, and say more than you mean, or could have intended; for it is reported the devil is not so black as he is represented, and I will not think that you could have premeditated such an extensive injury to society, but merely have felt the wish to possess or secure the conversation of gentlemen in preference to those of ladies, and not for unworthy purposes, which would be so grossly inconsistent, that I will not believe you ever thought of putting your ingenuity to the test for its accomplishment.”

“ You see further into futurity, Mr. Ardent, than I thought you capable of; but believe me or not, my last guinea shall be freely devoted to ruin you; I will now either drive you from this celebrated forest, or you shall drive me.

“ I have heard,” said Ardent, “ that no resentment is to be compared to a woman’s, and you now prove the fact beyond the possibility of a doubt. But then this only can arise from a depra-


vity of the milder feelings, changing into fury or madness, I know not which to call it; for anger, not restrained by the bounds of reason, is madness itself, and henceforth you must be considered as a woman of unsound mind, upon whom reasoning and arguments are lost."

"Every man should act upon the system of prevention, and as the preventive principle is necessary to ourselves and others, so in like manner I can do as easily as I can undo. Therefore, provoke me not further, lady, for if I am dared by insolence, I shall certainly confirm what I have at the present moment made doubtful, and which is acknowledged to be so by the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, who admits that my first communication has lost its force, and that he cannot now remove you from the village, as he had intended, and for which suspended or continued calamity he blames me very much, saying, 'I have ill judged between you and the public.' You are, in fact, confirming his own words, and proving he has by far a greater insight into moral turpitude than I have, or had; for as I am used, so others are to expect the same treatment."

"I care not, you are no longer of use to me;

you are a spy upon my actions ; do you think the Reverend Dr. Allworthy and yourself are to dictate my conduct in life ? that I am to have what friends you both like ? that I am to block up this part of my house, and possibly another ?”

“ You say truly ; it would not only have been as well to have blocked up the door of communication with your best bed-chamber, but the one also of much smaller dimensions, communicating with your back stairs through an adjoining room. These contrivances did not exist, as far as I can learn, previous to your coming to the house. I would restore it to what it was before, when a natural descendant of a noble duke lived here. You turn pale,—I fear I have gone too far, I mean not to hurt your feelings unnecessarily ; I should be sorry to give any person pain, but with the likelihood or prospect of benefitting. You have been my friend, and I shall always respect you for your preference to me above others, as you have frequently expressed it. I merely recommend these arrangements for your respectability in life. Since you have lived in the house, it is converted into contrivances more resembling, I won't say what, than a respectable lady's house.”



“Get you out of my house, I want none of your counsel or observations; I will follow my own ways; my character is now safe, and I defy you to do your worst.”

“A very grateful woman, but I thank you, madam.”

“O, Ardent, I loved you once beyond all men I ever met with, but now I hate you beyond all mankind.”

“You are a strange inconsistent lady. And so you do not fear my further communication with the Reverend Dr. Allworthy?”

“Not in the least; you have destroyed your own testimony, he will no longer believe you. It was just the situation I wanted to bring you to—into contempt—and then to spurn you from me.”

“Bravo, bravo, woman! your character is well described in the fifth chapter of Proverbs, and as you study the Scriptures, read it at your leisure. But I will take care you entangle no more young men, to laugh to scorn or bring into contempt.”

Ardent now rose from his chair, as he was about to leave the house, and exclaimed,—“Dr. Allworthy, thy prophesy is too true, she is another Milwood,” and, so saying, he was departing

from the house, when the beautiful lady, becoming more enraged than ever, called to her man servant with a loud voice,—

“ William, William ! collar that fellow ; turn him out, turn him out ! I will teach him to talk to me of back-stairs, fifth chapter of Proverbs, and Milwood’s. William, William ! ” The man-servant rushed into the house as Ardent was leaving it. “ Turn that fellow out, William.”

“ Who, madam, Mr. Ardent ? ”

“ Yes ; turn him out, collar him ! ”

The servant now putting himself in a bustle, before Ardent could leave the house, collared him, saying, “ You shan’t ill-use my mistress ; if my mistress bids me collar a man, I am d—d if I don’t ; so come along.”

“ Hands off ; I have done no more than my duty, fellow ! ”

“ Turn him out ; collar him, William ! Show him no mercy, he has shown me none.”

Ardent collared the man, and struggled in the hall with him, but, finding it was an inglorious competition, endeavoured to extricate himself from the bower of enchantment, or the fairy palace of his fair mistress, as it resembled now

the abode of the furies. A pause ensued on the part of the man-servant, from his want of breath, which gave Ardent an opportunity of addressing a short speech to this Cerberus-like antagonist, who guarded the gates of hell; for the palace of the fairy, in our hero's imagination, at least, resembled now the abode of demons rather than an angel."

"You perform," said Ardent, "your office of bully to admiration; all this violence confirms me in the late knowledge I have acquired of your mistress's character, which may be found in the fifth chapter of Proverbs."

"I have nothing to do," retorted the man-servant, "with fifth chapter of Proverbs; if my mistress tells me to collar a man, I am d—d if I don't, so come along."

Ardent had but just time to say, "a very good bull-dog," as he left the house, and was by no means sorry to find himself on the outside of his former paradise, as he had heretofore profanely called it.

The lady paused a moment after the departure of Ardent, then exclaimed, "He is gone! I have ruined his peace of mind for ever, and I will hang

him yet, if I can ; but for that purpose I must manage to become friends with him again. I am sorry for this hasty temper of mine, that caused the fray, as it will impede for a time the progress of my revenge. I have been too precipitate ; I was thrown off my guard by his bold effrontery ; I wish it had been his friend, the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, instead of himself. But what woman could have endured his banter, his accusations, or his insinuations ; I bore them as long as possible. I know not what to think, whether he was serious or jesting ; so much do the extravagances of wisdom approach the borders of folly and enthusiasm. I was willing to propitiate his resentment, had he only called upon me in the first instance ; but, instead of that, having gone to the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, I can never forgive him ; therefore he must now ruin me entirely, or I will ruin him. It is now too late to call the past hour back, or I would have relented, for I think he meant to be my friend again. But then, how could I trust him ? Some good will, however, result by making a noise in the village, and, reaching the ears of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, it will convince him, if anything can, how indifferent

I am to Ardent, and he to me; indeed, as he has calumniated my character, I was rather glad of the opportunity than otherwise, to redeem it, by ordering him from the house in the most uncourteous manner I possibly could, to show Dr. Allworthy and the respectable inhabitants of the village there is no collusion between us, nor that there ever was an intimacy of that tender nature he seems to have given the reverend doctor reasons for believing. Even William hesitated, until I stood by and backed him on, to collar him; or I do think he would have refused or delayed so long, until he escaped out of the house without the insult. This is the first scheme of many more I intend practising to ruin Ardent in the public mind, until I have destroyed him; for by making a public example of Ardent, I screen my own character from the suspicion of any partiality towards him. Self-preservation is the first law of nature: by defending myself, I but convince the world I did very right, and only what I was actually obliged to do; and the public mind is so torpid, or rather so stupid, that it can be made to believe anything the world chooses to impose on it as a matter of fact. Poor credulous human

nature is as easily gulled as a swallow catches flies. But I have a great deal to do before I can entirely ruin this young man ;—my bait must be the virtues again ; I must convince him I am still fond of him ; I must dissemble my anger and resentment, or I shall not sufficiently entrap him far enough either to hang, transport, or imprison him,—one of those three I must accomplish ; then only shall I be safe, for his perseverance is of such a nature, that I never had so much trouble to shake off a lover before. I will teach him to be in love with me ! I wonder at his assurance, as if twenty lovers would be sufficient for my insatiable eagerness to be admired ! Ardent's contest with me relates to principles, which he prefers to his mistress without them. I wish I had the power of the Empress Catharine of Russia, or Cleopatra : I would place him on board a gorgeous barge, gilt with gold, and silvered with waving banners, with flutes and flageolets playing to the music of the oars and the noise of splashing waters. Then, in the moment of the greatest hilarity, and when least expected or suspecting, I would consign him by my orders to a watery grave, beneath the wave of time and the

depth of oblivion ; and in such manner would I extinguish his ardent flame, and glory in the sacrifice of it to my revenge. There is yet time, before this body of mine, once so beautiful, and now not past its prime, becomes a corse of unreflecting matter, to ruin this young man, once my fondest of admirers, and, to say the truth, one of whom I was most fond, for he was candour itself, more than I ever before saw personified by man. To lure him to my bower once again, I must lull all his suspicions into a fatal security ; and when I have entangled his compassion, or his commiseration, I will endeavour to excite a new passion,—that of pity for my misfortunes ; he will then wish to come to my house to console, comfort, and converse with me ; then shall be my time to seek his ruin, and hard will it be indeed, if he does not find it. Those feelings of humanity shall be the secret agents of his destruction. He shall perceive the wretched state he has brought me to. It is then I will revenge myself upon him ; and, acting the part of a boa-constrictor, crush him, or, by placing him within the iron fangs of law, ruin him by litigation and law expenses, or bid it, like another engine of the

inquisition, do its duty ; and rare are the instances of escape from its powerful gripe. I will flatter his self-love, inform him I have relented, and wish for his consolation and advice. Thus honourably appealed to, he will propose calling to converse with me, and administer to a mind diseased. And this honourable feeling of Ardent's I will convert to his destruction. The more humanity and unsuspicion he evinces, the more assuredly he becomes my victim. I will glory in his agonies, and triumph in his despair. To make him contemptible among men shall be my ambition—his overthrow shall be my glory. I wish I could catch the wary Dr. Allworthy in the same toils, but he is too cautious and too timid to trust himself near me ; he is like a game-dog, smells the game afar off ; he has been put upon the right scent by Ardent,—therefore, like a staunch blood-hound, I have every thing to fear from him, and Ardent, the simple Ardent, must pay for all the injury Dr. Allworthy does me. My fall, if fall I must, shall be remarkable among women, and what Delilah was to Sampson, the strong man, I will be to Ardent ; first deprive him of his strength, of his integrity, and then he

will become an easy conquest. I will reduce him to be an object of pity, by bringing him into contempt; I will make a public spectacle of him, and reduce his shattered mind to the lowest ebb. No Machiavelian principles shall remain untried until I have battered down his hateful superiority; he is the proudest individual I ever met with, too independent in mind for his station in life. Fortune's wheel must now reverse its movements for his ruin, or I am no true prophetess. I will catch him as a fly is caught with honey; I will entangle him yet as a young stag, and, although he is as slippery as an eel, I will teach him the anger of a woman, and that a woman's rage is ungovernable. My favours slighted, my principles called in question, my religion considered as a mockery or jest, my lovers or friends called by opprobrious names, and my nunnery paradise will be now called by the Reverend Dr. Allworthy the gulf of principle and the grave of morals. It is too much to be endured; my last guinea I freely give to thee, O Fortune! only consent, thou, to ruin Ardent."

In such manner did this unfortunate lady harbour resentment within her bosom against Ardent,

and paved the way for the overthrow of herself and son. No sooner was her counsellor, Ardent, dismissed, than numbers came and took the advantage of his absence: one counselled one extremity, another a fresh one, as bad as the last; all endeavouring to interest her in their favour, they easily imposed upon her credulity and the remains of good-nature that she yet possessed. By instigating her against Ardent, they secured their own footing. He was her champion and defender, and when she lost her friend, she became the prey of harpies.

CHAPTER III.

“THE proper study of mankind is man,” says Pope; rather say, the proper study of mankind is woman, as the last chapter would seem to infer, and which should carry this conviction to our bosoms, that individuals cannot be too cautious how they trifle with that familiar little deity called Cupid, who wounds as well as amuses, as his barbed dart seems to imply, having two barbs to one shaft, thereby intimating there are at least two sorrows to be expected for one enjoyment.

Foresight was in his study, when the report reached his ears that our hero and his mistress had had a severe fall-out, which did not greatly surprise him, knowing full well the disposition of the parties. He made considerable retrenchments from the exaggerated reports, one affirming one thing, and another otherwise: each had their various ways of relating the same affair, some with subtraction, and others again with additions. But all agreed it was strange, as they had

been known to be strongly attached to each other, and there could be no doubt would be again. Some called it lovers' quarrels; others, more malignant, reported it as wild-fire, increasing as it went.

"I plainly perceive," argued Foresight to himself, "how it is between them: he has been giving her the counsel of a friend, or rather that of a husband, for which I think him blameable. She is a pretty woman, and he should take her as he finds her; the toy of the hour is one thing, and the reformation of her life is another. That he has been reproving I have no doubt, which has produced all this disturbance, making out the old saying, 'much ado about nothing.' It is strange he will attempt to make an honest woman of her; it is an odd whim of his, and will be attended with innumerable ill consequences to himself. It was but a few evenings since she assured me she had not seen him for several days or weeks; to be sure, she did not mention evenings or nights, nor did I then think to pop the question, or I should have perceived if she hesitated. I cannot help thinking he was then in the house, for I heard movements in the drawing-room; I am nearly

convinced I could not have been mistaken. But she became angry at the idea or suspicion, and I was too polite to utter a doubt of any lady's word and honour. She is a pleasing, pretty, fascinating woman, and her conversation agreeable, no doubt, or it would not be sought after so much by rival candidates for her favours. This is the only rational reasoning I can give to the reports. Sure, such another village was never seen or heard of,—it reminds me of the cave of Trophonius: what is spoken at one end is heard at the other. But I fear, after all that can be said, she is a lost woman, and such as can never be reclaimed by Ardent or the Reverend Dr. Allworthy either. I cannot help thinking but some reports must have reached the doctor's ears, or he would not have taken the school from her. The doctor of divinity, as he is now called, is not upon the same terms with her as heretofore—this I learned as a secret; perhaps Ardent has made her known to him; if so, it will account for this severe quarrel—time will disclose, and when I see Ardent I will inquire of him, as the true fountain of information."

CHAPTER VI.

THE Reverend Dr. Allworthy, as may be supposed, was excessively chagrined to hear that Ardent had committed himself so much, and, contrary to his advice, visited the lady again; this he had apprehended, and the fall-out between them was, as might be expected, the natural consequence. He did not entertain the idea that Ardent had proceeded to any great outrage, to cause the violence committed upon him,—he saw it was a blind made use of by her, to screen her conduct from the public, and falling out with Ardent in seeming anger, throw the weight upon him as the calumniator of an injured and aspersed woman; in fact, to induce the public to commiserate her in being deprived of the Sunday school through our hero. Dr. Allworthy was too profound a politician to be thus blinded, by dust thrown as it were into his eyes, to destroy, if possible, the testimony of Ardent, as a worthless character in whom no confidence could be placed.

He saw through the whole manœuvre; it was a dexterously got-up farce that she was playing—a sort of desperate game to retrieve her lost character in his estimation, and through him, that of other people. He certainly felt obliged to Ardent, at all events, and thought the inhabitants of the parish generally were under obligations to him, particularly the respectable females of the community, who might soon feel themselves comparatively at ease as to the consequences to which they might have been exposed, when it is considered so pestiferous a character lived so near them, who might seduce their husbands, sons, brothers, or friends,—himself, too, having an exact knowledge of her character, was sufficient to place ladies on their guard, when he chose to disclose his suspicions. He therefore watched all her movements narrowly, and with an eye of distrustful suspicion.

As the communication made by Ardent had not been denied by him, he placed full reliance on it, particularly as it was communicated with caution and reluctance, secrecy, and other observances of important information. To account for Ardent's temerity was impossible; he was lost

in conjecture on the subject, and the lady and the man-servant related the affair with such exaggerated circumstances, as to make it appear ten times more degrading, if possible. It was just the opportunity the lady wanted, superadded to which, rumour, with her hundred tongues and brazen throat, seized on the opportunity and promulgated the news with the greatest industry and perseverance, reverberating round the parish until it reached the extremities of the forest, as if it had been the report of distant thunder, echoing backwards and forwards, from hill to hill, and dale to dale. In this state of uncertainty and agitation was the public mind, which, like the ocean, ebbcd and flowed, as the various rumours arrived and receded, fluctuating to and fro, to the annoyance of many respectable people, and our hero in particular, who felt himself somewhat ashamed at such indignity being offered him by the authority of the lady herself. At this climax, Ardent determined to unveil the whole affair to the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, and his friend Foresight, and take each of their opinions upon the present posture of misrepresentation ; for the public, as is usually the case, had been informed

in an exaggerated manner of the whole transaction, and it became necessary for our hero to step forward and stop the reports in circulation, by undeceiving the aforesaid gentlemen, if they should have taken a wrong impression, requesting them to give discountenance to the rumour in those respectable quarters where it might seem necessary.

The Reverend Dr. Allworthy, equally anxious for Ardent, who was his protégé, as for the cause of religion generally, called upon Mr. Foresight for his opinion of the reports; and as he lived nearer the scene of action than himself, he conceived it possible he might be better informed,—consequently, resolved to avail himself of his information.

The worthy pastor of the village flock made it his especial business to obtain the best information on the subject, and waited for a further confirmation of his own opinion in some anxiety, not willing to believe that Ardent could have deceived him, or that he had mistaken the lady's character. Moreover, religion itself might be reflected upon, and brought into disrepute, which

he was desirous of preserving pure and unsullied by broils and scandal, for the rumours were kept in agitation by the village gossips. The irreligious, the immoral, and the licentious began to sneer at the principles and private motives of both parties, not greatly to the advantage of either, but still with every disposition to espouse the cause of the lady against the gentleman, which was very natural.

Not so was the mind of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy: he had his reasons for believing Ardent was an unsophisticated character, while the lady he did not entertain the most favourable opinion of, as he had before explained to Ardent himself, in his last conference with him. Thus prepared to hear the worst, he knocked at the door of Mr. Foresight's house, which was readily opened by that gentleman, who, with a civility peculiar to himself, and no doubt glad of the opportunity of hearing what so worthy a man would say upon the unpleasant rumours in agitation, exclaimed: "Dear sir, is it you? I am never more happy than when you do me the honour of a call."

"Say not so, Mr. Foresight, you are a valuable

character in the village; I wish I could say as much of the prudence of a person concerning whom I am come to speak to you."

"I can conceive who you mean, sir,—our friend Ardent: he is certainly very unlucky, and eternally getting his head into hot water."

"And, what I fear is worse, Mr. Foresight, bringing a scandal upon religion and good manners. Mrs. Freelove, as I hear, completely triumphs over him. She has, as she thinks, by this master-stroke of policy, confounded all her enemies, and myself in particular. Am I to attribute this last act of Ardent's to infatuation, or to madness? if infatuation, I shall entertain some hopes of him."

"His conduct, Dr. Allworthy, is very eccentric certainly: his aim is to make the lady reform, and she will have her own way, and the more he strives to reclaim her, the worse she becomes. I think he may be considered as an instrument in the hands of Providence, to reform her or to ruin her, or present her with the opportunity of ruining herself, which is equally probable; and perhaps the event will be at no very distant period, when one or both will probably lose their senses, which

will put an end to infatuation on the one hand, and consummate art or policy on the other. He does not take these affairs calmly : Ardent by name, and ardent by nature, he rushes headlong to the charge of crimination, with an attempt to reclaim her, or perhaps perish in the attempt. If he was to regulate his conduct like other men, and consider her merely as a pretty woman—the amusement of the hour—all these quarrels between them would not be heard of; to be sure, this has been by far the most noisy of any of its predecessors. But I have heard him say, there has been a difference in their sentiments for some time; himself perhaps endeavouring to reclaim her from encouraging what he calls improper company, at an improper time, and she striving to bend him to her way of thinking. That they have not been successful in their experiments upon each other, I judge from the various rumours afloat, resembling for discordance and unlikely representations the confusion in the tongues of Babylon, while building the Tower of Babel. Instead of following the conduct of a prudent man, he attributes to her virtues which she has not, and very likely never will have. He in fact scru-

tinizes her with the feelings and sympathies of his own mind, and expects more perfection than it is possible—nay, probable, that she can or will practise. These opinions I have been able to form, from the occasional conversations I have had with him relating to her; to be candid, a more ill-placed affection, and upon a less deserving woman, as it appears, could not well have occurred—it was very unpropitious to both, that they ever met, for nothing less than the overthrow of one or the other is now to be expected. They appear to me to be each struggling for the mastery, whether principle, or the want of it, is to triumph.”

“ You think then, Mr. Foresight, there is more of infatuation than madness, in the last visit he made to her house.”

“ Most assuredly I do, Dr. Allworthy: his opinions of life and manners are singular; he appears to me to have studied the best models of perfection, in a theoretical point of view, and now that he attempts to reduce them to practical experiment, the world, in its variety of characters, has presented to him one of the most artificial models of human and divine perfections, that he could well have been exposed to. Her assumption of

the milder virtues, and the graces of mind and person, come so near to the virtues of the modest part of the sex, that for a time, I dare believe, he did not distinguish the difference between the counterfeit and the real possessor of those attributes, which are the peculiar characteristics of the most estimable part of the fair sex. This arose from his inexperience, and as I have been informed by himself, in placing too much reliance upon his own judgment, rather than following that of his father."

"This admitted as the relative situation of the parties, I think, Mr. Foresight, you establish in my mind, that he is one more sinned against than sinning, although perhaps both, in the sight of God, are equally culpable. This affair is of too serious a nature in itself, I perceive, to be deemed of no importance to this village, and even to the public at large: less quarrels have overturned empires, and less consequences have produced a reformation of manners. Through which last supposition, I am very strongly inclined to give full credence to the suggestion of my own mind, that this young man struggling with vice and sin itself, —nay, grappling with it in its strong holds, should

be sustained in the unequal conflict, or he may be overpowered in the combat, and religion and virtue be deprived of one of her best champions and defenders. By turning him out of the house, she would make it appear she is innocent, and that he alone is in fault: however, I am luckily informed of her character, and shall prevent her doing so much mischief in time to come. She may throw dust in others' eyes, but it will not do,—I see through the whole of the design. It is to sacrifice Ardent, to the replacement of her own character."

"Ardent's former regard for this lady," said Mr. Foresight, "he has assured me, has been the most unbounded, on the previous supposition that she was all that he wished her to be, and finding her otherwise, as he inferred from all circumstances, and she having trifled with, or neglected his counsels—or perhaps braved him, these angry feelings have arisen on both sides; time will disclose what will be the end of this affair, for at this stage of the business I think it will not stop. Two such contrary characters and tempers as this lady and her lover rarely come in contact, and it may be said there never has been a uniformity of sen-

timent between them for any long continuance of time: either he has been for remonstrance, or she for unlimited control, and thence have proceeded all the bustle we hear of. He occasionally calls upon me, laments her being such a character,—so ambiguous, so doubtful, so mild, and yet so artful. If he does not comprehend her yet, he will before he has done with her, or she with him. Indeed, I think her conduct and character seems about to disclose itself, although its full development will be considerably shortened by his indignation; yet she has, it must be admitted, many good traits in her character; it is a pity her conduct is not consistent with them.”

“Have you heard, Mr. Foresight, who this uncle of hers is, or who he is supposed to be.”

“I have not, sir; all is mystery, the profoundest mystery, and remains as it was, in impenetrable obscurity. No one has ever heard of his name, rank, or character; some do not scruple to call him young Freelove’s father, which I think to be a very natural conclusion. I am told Freelove is very like his guardian; so Ardent says, for he has seen him, and conversed with him; he says he never saw two persons bear so strong a resem-

blance, allowing for the difference in age ; and as to the reports upon the present falling-out of these two eccentric individuals, for extraordinary they both are, it will be, I apprehend, more than a nine days' wonder, before it blows over, as if nothing had occurred, or the public mind will have something fresh to talk of."

" I merely called upon you, Mr. Foresight, to have my opinion confirmed or not as to Ardent, for as to the lady, I have fully made up my mind about her. I will now wish you good morning, sir, and thank you for the information you have given me."

" It gives me pleasure, Dr. Allworthy, to be at all useful to you in the investigation of this mysterious affair, for that there is a mystery about the lady, none can doubt, and that Ardent will penetrate the secret, or leave others an easy mode of finding it, I think is equally probable ; but the termination of the quarrel none can yet foresee. I apprehend it is now gone too far for them ever to be friends again, and the probability is, that they will ruin each other, both being ardent characters ; the one combatting on the side of prin-

ciples, and the other in all appearance divesting herself of such incumbrances."

To this the Reverend Dr. Allworthy assented, and took his leave; and, after his departure, Mr. Foresight continued the train of reasoning which his visitor had interrupted. "If ever there was a good man, a sincere character and a good christian, I believe the Reverend Dr. Allworthy to be one,—he may be truly said to be the man of God. I wish I could say the whole world was like him; then would happiness reign on earth, and these broils and conflicts of angry feelings on both sides, would never have had a beginning. I am myself amazed at all circumstances, and yet I do not know why I should be so, considering the previous suspicions I have so long entertained, and that for so long a period. She has evidently done herself harm, by thus expelling Ardent from her house so violently, and the Reverend Dr. Allworthy is decidedly of the opinion it was for the purpose of shielding her own character, at the expense of his. "If ever man was under the influence of infatuation, Ardent is that man, and in risking his own character to save hers, he is in my mind no less

than a fool." At this observation the worthy philosopher shrugged up his shoulders as if conveying more meaning than he was inclined to express by words. "But he will buy his experience," continued the astrologer, "and I think she will make him pay very dear for it in the end. He is one of those beings that sometimes make their appearance in the hemisphere of the human passions, who will not gather the rose without pricking his fingers with the thorns. Perfection, or nothing, is the terms of his friendship; his love is of too ardent a nature to bear the rein; his aim is to establish those regulations in human society with which the world is at variance; and human nature, and human resentments, with the rest of its imperfections, he will find to be ever at variance with him. He that will attempt reforming the world, particularly this old world, of human infirmities, should be prepared to receive a bountiful return of the blows of fortune. Some hug their vices, others their follies—all are in love with something, but very few with wisdom. Virtue and vice may now be considered as grappling with each other for superiority;—not that I mean to assert Ardent is a perfect character, for that would be paying

him too high a compliment, but, as compared with some others, he may be called virtuous, for none are absolutely perfect, and he that comes nearest to it, is deserving of the palm-branches of triumph, and if successful in combatting with his passions, to the olive-branches of peace, if not to the laurel crown, as a reward for the establishing of human wisdom, above the control and influence of the baser passions, whether of resentment or any other infirmity to which human nature is prone.

“It is true, she has the strongest purse, therefore is most likely to prevail against him; but then he has greater right on his side, so that it is at present doubtful to which side fortune, or divine Providence, will bend the scales. If justice is thrown into the balance, he will eventually prevail; but if fortune continues favourable to her, she may not be defeated. A pretty woman and a strong purse are great odds against you, Ardent, but I am inclined to moralise, and animadvert for my amusement, as a looker-on of this strife and discord of the jarring elements of human passions and infirmities. This business is either in the hands of Providence or the fates; if in the hands of Providence, he may be said to be an instrument

made use of for more important purposes than the petty broils of this petty village ; perhaps this exercise of his mental faculties is only a prelude, or preparatory stage to more important enterprises, as that of an attempt to reform nations, kingdoms, and the world ; but if influenced by the fates alone, the fortune of the war will prove too mighty for him. She has in part blasted his prospects in life, and he will hurl her from her proud elevation, so as to prevent her doing further mischief to society.

“ However much he may suffer and no doubt will, yet the honest part of the community will be advantaged : of that, I think, there can be little doubt. The firmest virtue, ere this, has tottered on its pedestal, and Ardent, like another Hercules, will crush the hydra, and give liberty again to the hemisphere of the village and its neighbourhood.”

It was in this manner Mr. Foresight reasoned mentally with himself after the departure of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, who felt himself not only interested in preserving the peace and tranquillity of the village, but in preserving its moral and religious principles.

CHAPTER VII.

ARDENT reflected upon all the occurrences of the past, present, and the probabilities of the future, as connected with the idol of his former regard, but who he fancied was now become—from a strong exciting cause, certainly—his aversion; but perhaps some better feelings existed in the bosoms of both our hero and heroine, for it is natural for man to love the sex; and particularly the one he had fancied himself to lay under obligation to, although precisely the reverse was the fact. He was angry, and that anger believed itself founded on a good cause, which had principle for its basis. Now, whether it was really the *primum mobile* of the fall-out, is not material to establish at the present moment: our task now is, to state that he arrived at his own house in a state of mind that can be better conceived than expressed, perhaps vowing vengeance,

for angry lovers will storm, and the greater the agitation, the more convincing is the regard to the beloved object.

It was the plurality in love which was the true cause that offended our hero's delicacy,—a lady and entertain two lovers, nay more! It was too bad to be borne with, all modern lovers would agree with him, and such was his sentiments, that at all ventures it should be discontinued. To confirm him the more in resentment against her, he recollected all the Reverend Dr. Allworthy had said,—his forewarning him, and many prognostications which appeared nearly all to have been realized, within the short space of a few hours, or at the most a few days. He may now have been considered in that state of mind, as disposed him to retaliate a few of the smarts he had endured upon herself. By releasing the good Dr. Allworthy from that restraint he had placed him under, by the injudicious letter he was requested to write to him, by one whom he thought to oblige, and when he expected to meet with thanks at the least, for her to avow, it was purposely contrived to bring him into contempt, showed such a malignancy of heart and mind, that he

could no longer tolerate it: recrimination followed, and expulsion was the consequence.

He did not visit the reverend divine immediately, for that would have been too precipitate; he waited to hear the various rumours of the transaction, before he finally condemned her, wishing to extend still some mercy towards her, had she shown any appearance of relenting, or expressed any sorrow for the violence used towards him. Her triumph was complete. The accused had not vindicated himself, he had said nothing in his defence, but that it was an unfortunate occurrence, or some such palliative remark, that even her own partizans began to think she was carrying the joke rather too far. Not so herself: she was prepared for further mischief, and seeking for every opportunity to destroy the man who had attempted to save her by his counsel.

What further remained to be done? Either Ardent must follow up his original design, and leave her in the hands of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, or he must consent to hear himself violently aspersed as a detractor from her morals and virtues, for nothing less than appearing again in the world as an immaculate character would sa-

tisfy her. There may have been intemperate zeal on both sides, each to traduce the other, the one to save the inhabitants of the village from further seductions to her caprice, and the other to annihilate the individual who placed a restraint upon her intemperate conduct.

A week had passed away, and Ardent had given the subject his most mature consideration, when he called upon the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, and announced himself to the reverend divine in the following manner.

“ I am earlier undeceived, Dr. Allworthy, than I expected. I am reluctantly a visitor here, but the cause of saving further victims from this mischievous woman, is now my business with you. As a preliminary, I confirm all I have hitherto said, without any qualification whatever. She wants common gratitude, and in wanting that, is deficient in every other good quality, in my estimation. She says her reputation is now safe, that I have destroyed my own evidence, and bids me defiance; that she thinks the civility of acknowledging herself obliged to me for the letter I sent you, is too much. The hazard I ran in sinking myself in your estimation to save her, she

values as nothing, saying contempt was what she wanted to bring me to, and then to spurn me from her—indeed, she out-herods Herod.

“ ‘I defy you,’ ” are her words—you have denied and lied—and now I laugh you to scorn, and forbid you my house, lest you become a spy upon my actions. In fact, she said you and myself were a pair, and fit company for each other.”

“ Well, sir, what further passed ? ”

“ My reply was to the following purport : ‘ If you are convinced that your character will not bear the strict test of scrutiny in time to come, I am better outside of your house than in it, and so far I am obliged to you for your intimation. But it would have been preferable to have delivered the same sentiment in a more gracious manner, and not have braved me : by so doing, your policy is short-sighted, you make an enemy of your friend, who has risked in part his character to save yours. ’ ”

“ Well, sir, what said she further ? ”

“ As you had foretold, she is lost to every sense of propriety ; even common prudence has totally forsaken her. I am induced to believe her vice is nearly allied to madness. She will

not be controlled by either you or me. She wants neither our company or admonitions. Her object appears to be, making more proselytes, and she is angry that some check is placed upon her. She has an insatiable appetite for fresh adulation, fresh praises, and fresh constitutions, that she may break down the barriers of virtue, and inundate the helpless beings with the poisons of her immorality. Her various shades of character are as frequently changed, as the cameleon is said to do the colour of his skin.

“ To the infidel she is profane—to the religious, sanctity itself—to the serious she is grave—to the youthful lover, simplicity, and all the bewitching softness of apparent innocence—to the military character, she is an amazon—would shoulder his musket, flourish his sword, and be familiar with his pistols—talk obscenely, and sing loose songs—to the parliamentary character, she is sententious, and the welfare of the community forms her conversation. She is then the general philanthropist, and has charity without end.”

“ Enough, enough! I dare not hear more; indeed, I have been too passive in allowing you to

proceed so long, without checking your career of description. Profane not the walls of religion, nor the gospel of the living God—you have not deceived me, but rather confirmed me in my notions of her principles.

“Adultery, sir, to such a woman, said the worthy divine, shrugging his shoulders, would be more acceptable than fornication, from being the more considerable sin, and more extensive mischief resulting therefrom, both in this world and in the next. You will not recall what you have now said at a future time?”

“Dr. Allworthy, I have spoken no untruth,—I have at no time recalled the truth, nor ever will ; she is now at your mercy—I have done with her. She has proved herself to me to be unworthy of my sacrifice ; therefore, I recall my late supplication in her favour, and now suffer the wrath of the Almighty to fall upon the truly hardened sinner.”

“Very well, sir,” said the worthy divine, “she is now in my hands ; do not you again interfere, and the Almighty’s vengeance will overtake her. Keep clear your own head from the thunderbolt of heaven. Her retribution is at hand—stand you

not in the porch, when the angel of the Lord slayeth with a mighty sword."

The Reverend Dr. Allworthy having delivered this important address to Ardent, the latter returned to his own house, deeply impressed with the solemn appeal and denunciation, no longer regretting that he had placed an effectual check to her further seductions.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE are again about to introduce the reader to the house of our fair and frail heroine, who, although not possessed of the chaste purity of the moon, now began to experience one of its attributes, that of waning in attractive splendour and brilliancy. *Tête-a-tête*, then, in a room of this hitherto magnetic house was seated the lady we speak of and the mysterious unknown, "My Uncle," we have before spoken of as being one of the worthy members of the British senate, as well as a complete will-o'-the-wisp to our forest friends, who had often chased him with curious and eager inquiries, and had as often found themselves bewildered in a bog or thicket of difficulties and incongruities, till their ill-success compelled them for awhile to give up the pursuit until something happened to rouse their curiosity afresh, and again lead them through a routine of trackless labyrinths of renewed intricacy and perplexity. But this cozy *tête-a-tête* of the senator

and his charming niece was soon interrupted by a loud and boisterous knocking at the hall-door—the countenance of the Parliamentary gentleman in an instant fell several degrees and the lady looked disconcerted.

“ I thought,” said my Uncle, “ that you led a life of seclusion and privacy from the impertinent intrusions of inquisitive company ; you remember the warning I gave you on that subject ? ”

“ Perfectly well, my dear sir, and I do assure you that I have rigidly adhered to it ; for I have not only sedulously avoided forming fresh connexions and acquaintance, but have done all I possibly could to dismiss the few I already had, and this I rather think, by what I saw from the window, is one I have not met for a long time.”

“ Who is he, then ? ” gruffly demanded my Uncle.

“ Only a physician, my dear sir,” softly replied the niece, “ at least a retired physician of advanced years, who has relinquished public practice and now amuses himself with farming ; indeed, he has taken one in this forest, about four miles from here.”

“ Well, and what have you to do with that ? ”

what the devil brings him here? Does he come to learn from you how and when he is to turn his young heifers into useful motherly cows, or what sire he had better engage to stock his stables with vigorous young cart-horses? for in what else he can think you competent to teach him, I am at a loss to conceive."

"Indeed, my good sir, he never comes to ask any such shocking questions; only, as he attended me in an illness some few years back, he has sometimes since made complimentary calls."

"Damn his complimentary calls, and him too," grumbled the incog.; "really, what with physicians, surgeons, parsons, poets, astronomers, bankers, captains, and the devil knows who else, yours is a strange kind of privacy and seclusion. Why, your levee is almost as numerous and heterogeneous as that of a prime minister's or the petticoated favourite of some great man!" Here the lady cast a look of subdued archness at the dignified man of mystery, who was about continuing his peevish remarks, when an increased repetition of the unwelcome sounds for admittance broke with still louder thunder than before on the irascible auricular organs of the testy Uncle, who

was now arrived at the utmost altitude of forbearance: "Knock, knock, knock," growled the enraged senator, "plague take you! I wish you were knocked down: ring the bell, Elizabeth, and order the servant to deny him admittance,—it is time I put an end to this inundation of male visitors, who come hither in swarms like dogs near their canine mistresses in the dog-days."

"Be patient, my dear sir, and I will quickly dismiss this harmless inoffensive gentleman, who, good-hearted old soul, would be surprised that his mere visit of civility should be so uncivilly received; however, that he may not annoy you with his presence, I will take him with me on the lawn," and, so saying, the adroit lady opened the hall-door herself, and in walked the subject of my Uncle's annoyance, Dr. Doubtful, who, by the way, was about sixty years of age, of a hearty robust constitution; added to which, he professed himself to be what was termed a freethinker, and still more so a free speaker. But not to keep this worthy longer in the entrance, we will detail what passed between so select a couple:—no sooner, then, did the lady of unrestrained virtue give an entrance to the gentleman of uncontrolled thoughts,

than she put her finger to her lip, by way of giving him warning to be careful of what passed his own, and then cautiously whispered that her Uncle was in the next room. The visitor was not so unpractised in the art or mystery of uncle and niece as not to understand the part he must act ; therefore, making a signal of acknowledgment to the lady that he understood her, he said, in a voice intended to reach the ears of this hunted tusky boar of the forest, " Good morning, madam,—just called to make inquiries after your health, which, if I may judge by your looks, seems pretty well."

" Never better, doctor, I assure you," said the lady in the same loud tone of voice, " and I hope your health has been equally favourable since I last had the pleasure of seeing you, which is so long ago that I began to think you had left this part of the country," at the same time giving the doctor an arch look which contradicted the assertion ; " but, however," she continued in the same loud tone, and with the same significant expression of countenance, " as it will no doubt be a very long time before you come to see me again, for your visits are generally so wide apart, and of such short continuance when they do take place,

that I am obliged to seize the opportunity of asking your advice about prescriptions whenever I can—in short, as I am now about to do; so favour me with your company on the lawn, for I dare say you are in too great a hurry to enter the parlour and sit awhile.”

“ You are right, madam, and you know my avocations are too numerous to admit of idle gossip; but I shall be very happy to devote a few minutes in giving you any advice for your welfare that lies in my power, and hope it will be of service to you. And now, madam, we will, if you please, repair to your pretty lawn, as the air is freer there than it is within doors;” then, lowering his voice to a whisper, he said, “ and you know, madam, will allow of freer conversation.” The lady answered by a certain look and smile that told him she comprehended his meaning; then, conducting him to the desired spot, she informed him he was now at liberty to speak as openly as he pleased, uncontrolled by the oppressive atmosphere that surrounded her uncle.

“ Thank you, madam,” said the doctor, “ and to show my sense of the favour you confer on me,

so congenial to the unshackled bent of my disposition, allow me to offer you my congratulations on having the most charming premises I ever beheld; really, madam, Dame Nature has not been niggardly in showering her favours on you."

"And really, doctor," said the lady, with a laugh, "your compliment comes in such a questionable shape, or rather has so much of the Irish bull in it, that I am at a loss to conceive whether I am indebted to the provident dame you speak of for the favours of personal charms or the charms of property—if the latter, the praise is rather due to Madame Fortune, than her elder sister, Madame Nature. Indeed, your remark recalls to my mind one made by an Irish gentleman to a fair lady on a similar occasion: 'Upon my word, madam,' said he, with the most impassioned look he could assume, 'your parts here about are of the most beautiful and picturesque description I ever beheld, and you have fine air;' the lady blushed at the dubious compliment, combined, as it was, with the expressive looks of the admiring swain."

"But by way of comprehending the real point of your congratulation, doctor, tell me what you really think of my floral collection."

“ Why, then, madam, to answer you as intelligibly as possible, I think your floral beauties almost as admirable as your personal ones ; but let me see what they consist of—ah ! here is the lily, the rose, and among them the flower which bears the imposing name of heartsease, but I do not think it so deserving of such an appellation as some other remedies I could name ; and here, too, is the honeysuckle, with its delicate scented neighbour, the sweetbriar : these flowers, in my opinion, exceed all exotics of a more modern importation ; indeed, they have been with us so long as to be almost considered indigenous, or natives of the soil and clime of England ; but they are indebted for their luscious perfume to more salubrious and gentle gales than those we experience in our northern winter. It is fortunate that the spring and summer of our isle in some measure compensate for the cold foggy months of the wintry season, or our most beautiful flowers of the human as well as botanical species would fly the ungrateful clime which tended rather to destroy than cherish their loveliness ; every man, too, who possessed a soul (which, by the by, I suppose means his assemblage of passions) would

also accompany them, for what would life be without the embellishment of lovely woman and bright tinted flowers, which grow only for their adornment and delight."

"Admirable flattery!—Upon my word, doctor, you are growing quite dangerous, and I am only surprised that in your rhapsody on flowers you had not more particularly sung the eulogiums of the rose; for have not the poets asserted that it forms a principal part in the chaplet of Venus? and does not the little god of love himself enwreath his brows with its blushing tints? Anacreon, too, the voluptuary (whose gray hairs and green desires you might be almost considered to resemble), sang in praise of its brilliant hue and odorous sweets, and entwined the rosy garland around his hoary temples, deeming it alone worthy to blend its beauties with the deeper blushes of the soft blooming luscious grape: besides, even Hymen, the god of all good youths and maidens, saw nothing naughty or improper in being crowned with its warm coloured blossoms."

"Ah! madam, the two first names you have just mentioned, have cruelly sported with me in my time, and, ah! I feel that that time is not, nor

will be yet, at an end; for even now the mischievous little deity is pouring forth such a shower of artillery from your beautiful eyes, as pierces into the innermost recesses of my quivering heart; which, no longer enduring to be the only sufferer, is flying to all other parts of the body;—at least, I think it must be so, for the smart is not entirely confined to the spot where the heart is usually supposed to be fixed,—and, to crown all, I believe the urchin has hurled his fiery torch at me; so, have a care, madam, how you approach me, lest I should scorch you with its flaming heat.”

“Poor man, you are much to be pitied; certainly, it is too bad that you should suffer on my account, but really, as I have not time at present to attend to the calls of humanity or any other Christian office, I will defer my advice on your case until three days hence, when I shall be rid of my Uncle; so call on me then, and we will have a long conference, for I have much to tell you, and also to ask your advice on.”

“Indeed, madam, I shall be too happy to give you my best advice on your case, and not only that but to administer the remedy also.”

“Nay, doctor, a truce with jesting on the subject I allude to, for I believe you are aware that I have lately been considerably perplexed about a ridiculous dilemma into which I have fallen, and which I intended to ask your opinion of, and also your advice as to how I should act in the affair; for really I am so beset with fiery fanaticism on one side, and headstrong infatuation on the other, that I am half bewildered and puzzled how to conduct myself in the affair.”

“Laugh at them, madam, as I do, and that is the least I think they deserve from you. Why, what more does the unconscionable Doctor Allworthy require? Surely, he ought not to complain, for you attend to all the outward forms of religion, and that is as much as some of the clergy themselves do—to my certain knowledge many preach what they do not practise, and practise what they dare not preach—‘Do as I say, not as I do,’ cries the preacher. Oh! I should make a more sincere divine than many of them, for I would endeavour all that lay in my power to make myself intelligible to the weak faculties of the ignorant. For instance—a silly clodpole of a clown came to me the other day, and asked who the

Virgin Mary was; suspecting his motive for inquiring, I asked him if he was going to say his Catechism, or to answer questions as to his knowledge of religious affairs; the booby replied he was: 'Well, then,' said I, 'when they ask you who the Virgin Mary was, say she was one of that class that sits on the seven hills of Rome, or say she was a woman who was anything but a virgin.'

"Upon my word, doctor, that was making yourself plainly understood indeed; but did the rustic lout answer in the very undisguised manner you bid him?"

"Oh! yes; and it has drawn all the parish ranters out in battle array against me; so comfort yourself with not being singular in your persecutions from the pious, for I am likely to become as much of a martyr as yourself, and, perhaps, even more so; for I think I must leave my farm rather than live among such an ungrateful set, who assail me for endeavouring to enlighten their darkened understandings and infuse a little portion of common sense into their thick skulls. But however, I shall not trouble myself any further with their self-willed follies, but let

them believe what they will in future, be it ever so extravagant ; for there are none so blind as those who will not see, or so deaf as those who will not hear. But I must not trespass further on your time at present, or 'my Uncle' will think our conference rather long ; so, if you please, madam, we will renew the subject three days hence, under more comfortable auspices than our present roofless place of meeting."

"With all my heart, doctor, and I promise you that you shall be as snugly situated within four walls and a roof as you can possibly desire ; for my grave Uncle will then have removed his intolerably dignified solemnity and rigid notions of propriety, to the great relief of us who like to indulge a little harmless freedom in our chat—don't we, doctor ? So, good by for the present, and treasure up all your drollery to bring me by that time." So saying, this pair of free-souled worthies heartily shook each other by the hand in token of their amiable consanguinity of sentiment and disposition, and with this mark of friendly familiarity they parted, the unscrupulous doctor to think of a speedy return, and the equally unscrupulous lady to coax down the angry risings

of her Uncle by abusing her precious associate. On her returning to the room where the moral senator was seated, he hastily growled an inquiry if the fellow was gone?

“Yes,” said the niece, who had now assumed the appearance of great fatigue; “yes, the tiresome loquacious old being is gone at last, and I believe he would not have gone even then had he not observed how extremely tired and annoyed I was with his garrulity. I hope he will never come here again, and, indeed, I gave him some very plain hints to that effect.”

“And what, pray, was the subject of his long harangue, or whatever it was?”

“The subject, my dear sir? rather say the host of subjects, for I am sure their number and dissimilarity bewildered and confused me the while he was delivering them, and they now float helter-skelter about my brain like a wild chaos of words and sentences; as for arranging them in order for recapitulation, that is utterly impossible—but let me see, there was something about plants and flowers, and warm climates for ladies, though what he meant by it I know not, but something no doubt very impudent.—I dare say the shocking

creature meant to say it was to give them warm constitutions. Then, again, he spoke of farming, physic, and saints, plough-boys, clowns, and Methodists. These, with a great many more things I could not exactly understand, formed his motley and uninteresting discourse; but, above all, I recollect there was something about virgins."

"Virgins! Gracious God, what could he have to say about them? a strange subject, certainly, to converse with you upon. But pray, if it is not too bad for you to recapitulate, let me hear what he said on so delicate a topic."

"I am very sorry to say, my dear sir, that he is a very wicked old man, and so I told him, for he undertook to teach a boy his Catechism, and, would you believe it, sir? he told him to say, when they asked him who the Virgin Mary was, that she was a—I hardly know how to speak it, that she was—in short, that she was a woman."

"Nay, Elizabeth, you are now too fastidious, —you are carrying your delicacy too far; the doctor was right enough,—the Virgin Mary was a woman, and a very good woman, too, the mother of our Saviour, as the Testament informs us, wherein she is spoken of as a very pious woman."

“ Yes, sir, but that was not the kind of woman the doctor meant ; indeed, I cannot summon up sufficient resolution to tell you the appellation he gave her, but he said she was a—” here the lady again hesitated, “ a naughty woman, indeed,—a poor frail sinner, not exempt from the sins of the flesh, which, Heaven pity us, so many of us are burdened with ;” and here the lady cast her eyes up to the ceiling, with something like a Magdalen expression, while the countenance of the Uncle gleamed with the anger of offended morality and religion, which he affected to uphold and patronize, that any little peccadilloes he might chance to commit should not be suspected. Therefore, with an angry voice he exclaimed, “ What an abominable, detestable, diabolical, irreverend, and scandalous old sinner ! I am astonished that you could listen to his profane mockery for one moment ; why, do you not know that it was an unpardonable sin in you even to hear it ?”

“ I know it was, sir ; and, indeed, I tried all I could not to hear it, by stopping my ears and making every possible sign of indignation and abhorrence ; but all would not do, for the shocking old reprobate was determined on making me

hear ; therefore, I had no other resource than to give him a hearty scolding. I told him, he had quite mistaken my character if he thought I encouraged infidelity, or freethinking principles, and that I never would endure such conversation as he uttered ; that I attended my church regularly, and would bid defiance to all his sneers at our holy religion. I then reproached him with his hardened wickedness, in talking, as he did, with one foot in the grave and the other hardly out. I bade him repent and prepare for what, in the course of nature, must ere long happen to him ; then, sharply reproving him for the liberty he had taken in making use of such conversation before me, I bade him begone, and never appear here again till he had thoroughly reformed and repented of his irreverend opinions. He seemed struck with my reproaches, and took his leave accordingly."

" It was well he did ;—upon my word, madam, you have somehow or other contrived to contract a truly strange set of acquaintance, both among the extremely pious and the extremely impious ; and that, too, notwithstanding my vehement injunctions to the contrary."

“ Indeed, sir, it is truly against my wishes or inclinations ; for I could be perfectly contented to lead a life of entire seclusion from all, save a few acquaintance of my own sex.”

“ And that would be quite sufficient, I should think,” growled the temporary Cerberus. “ But who,” he continued, “ is this Captain Racket, that William speaks of as coming backward and forward so much of late ? I do not understand why you should make your house a complete rendezvous to all impertinent idlers who choose to make a claim on your time or notice.”

“ Do not be angry, dear sir : the person you speak of is only the nephew of my good old friend, the worthy Mrs. Goodwill, widow of the late clergyman of our parish. The poor young fellow is very dull since he left the army, and, by way of beguiling his time, he occasionally brings a message from the good lady, his aunt. Indeed, for a few nights, when Mrs. Goodwill’s house was crowded with company, he took a bed here ; but then it was not the bed in which you sleep, dear uncle, for that, you know, I reserve entirely for yourself. Besides, he is but a simple, harmless, half-witted fellow, by no means to be dreaded by any woman of discernment.”

“ Perhaps not, and however foolish he may be he is not the less dangerous to your character and reputation on that account ; besides, you do not want for fools, or (according to the specimen of to-day) rogues either ; and mark me, if you persist in retaining such a bevy of the opposite sex in your train, it will be at the risk of my displeasure and the loss of my protection and support—so, choose between their acquaintance and mine, for my own dignity cannot allow you to have both.”

“ Dear uncle,” said the lady, in the most pathetic and deprecating tone of voice, “ how can you even desire me to choose so cruel an alternative ? I am sure I would rather sacrifice the whole world than lose your valuable friendship and esteem ; and I am sure, if I had known you would have had such a violent objection to this simple, inoffensive nephew of Mrs. Goodwill’s, he should never have come even within the outer gate of my premises. But, as it is, I will be rid of him, by picking a quarrel with him for coming so often, to the injury of my reputation and the great displeasure of my respectable relatives ; and I will make myself so angry with him that I will order him never to come within my sight again.”

“ Do so, Elizabeth, for I can assure you I felt extremely indignant that you should have been so imprudent as to have encouraged such a fellow to visit you, and especially to allow of his sleeping here. I thought he must be some intrusive half-pay officer of militia, and I had a very great mind to use my influence and have him recalled to his regiment, or get him promoted to a marching regiment destined to the West Indies, where the yellow fever and the climate would cure him of too sanguine a complexion or constitution ; and if it stored not his pockets with gold, would at least supply his skin with the colour of it, and make him a tempting object for a lady’s love. But, however, cool reflection would not allow me to compromise my dignity by taking any trouble about the fellow, and I give you this warning instead. So now, if you have a regard for the welfare of yourself and son, you will do your utmost endeavour to rid yourself permanently of all the male vermin which so infest your house.”

“ I will, dear sir,” said the lady, “ and you shall be the only one admitted.”

“ Thank you, Elizabeth, for the compliment,” said the dignified gentleman, with a smile.

“ It was no compliment, I assure you sir,” replied the lady, “ for I am perfectly sincere.”

“ Humph !” muttered the Uncle. “ Your explanations only make bad worse ; therefore, to borrow an old proverb, which says, ‘ that the least said is the soonest mended,’ I will excuse any words or explanations from you on the subject ; and, as you are now acquainted with my wishes, not to say commands, we will drop the subject.” So saying, the conversation ended.

CHAPTER IX.

ARDENT was engaged at his own house when Dr. Doubtful called, as he occasionally did when coming to the village.

"I have called upon you, Mr. Ardent," said the doctor, "to learn who that old gentleman is at our pretty neighbour, Mrs. Freelove's? I think I once saw him by accident."

"I really cannot inform you, Dr. Doubtful; but the lady, as I learn, calls him her Uncle."

"He is a sturdy old fellow, with the manners of a hog."

"Very likely, sir, but upon my word I can give you no information upon that subject; I only know that the lady calls him her Uncle and Freelove's guardian. I once breakfasted with the gentleman you speak of, and when I was about to leave the house, I saw a hat lying upon the hall table, so like my own, that I placed it upon my head in a mistake,—so spruce was the old gentleman's hat

that it was of a fashion more becoming to my age, as I thought, than his own."

"But who is the old prig?"

"That is still a perfect mystery, Dr. Doubtful: some have said one thing, some another;—he may be the Pope of Rome, for anything that I know to the contrary."

"As likely as not, or our old friend, Pope Broadbrim, ha, ha, ha! If the first, he takes care to be near a d——d fine woman, though; and his tiara does not interfere with the laws of nature, which his holiness, no doubt, very well knows to be the laws of God. And this is equally applicable to him of the broad-brim as he of the triple crown."

"This is an ass's kick at the lion, friend Doubtful. But you and our neighbour Friendly have not been upon good terms for some years, so that it gratifies you to have a fling at him in his absence."

"I cannot perceive, Ardent, why there should be all this mystery; and while there is, we may select any one we choose to satisfy or attempt to gratify our constructive reasoning to fill up the want of information we require upon the subject."

“ So far, Dr. Doubtful, it may be admitted as excusable, but in no other manner than by inference, not amounting to suspicion. I mentioned, casually, one dignified personage, famous for holy and pious callings, and you immediately associated with him another, as if to keep him company, when it is very well known the lady does not acknowledge more than one Uncle.”

“ Well, well, you indulge your supposition and I will entertain mine,—one is equally as eligible as the other. And as to their sanctity, under the rose be it spoken, they would each be glad to banquet under the same bush ; let no one else be present than himself and the lady, she would make them both prove their gallantry, or I am very much deceived, which I have seldom been hitherto in human nature and human laws.”

“ With respect to your suspicions, doctor, I can only mention as a fact, that upon my first acquaintance with the lady, she actually drank health and success to Broad-brim ; no doubt complimenting our old friend, thee and thou, the gentleman with the brown wig and three-cornered hat, with its broad brim round the Golgotha of his beaver.”

“ Which is worn, no doubt, Ardent, for the especial purpose of commanding reverence from the weak heads of silly men and women, who have in general a strong predilection for out-of-the-way oddities.”

“ Stop, Dr. Doubtful, we seem to be going great lengths with our friend ; who, to his honour be it spoken, is a friend to most men.”

“ He may be ; but you must admit he is a much greater friend to himself.”

“ And so we are all, sir, or ought to be, or we should soon tire in our exertions. But to my certain knowledge the worthy doctor has been of considerable use in his day, and has improved the science of medicine in this neighbourhood ; for when he first commenced practice, physic was at a low ebb, which has enabled him to overrun the country since and make a large fortune. This justice is his due, and you must admit, sir, that even the devil himself would be deserving of praise if he performed good actions.”

“ Faugh ! stop your encomiums on the Quaker —I want to know who is the old prig I left with the lady ?”

“ That is more than I can tell you, Dr. Doubt-

ful—as he comes, so he goes, like a shadow following a substance in the sunbeams, or the substance following its shadow, the phantom-like lady of these parts, who has as many characters to sustain as a fairy in possession of a magic wand.”

“ This is strange—what, no one know him, or where he comes from ? But how does the necromancer arrive ? is it through the air, or by what visible or invisible means that you are acquainted with ? ”

“ A post-chaise is his vehicle in his movements to and from this pavilion of enchantment and magical influence upon the senses of men ; for none approach the bower without being in some degree infected with the malady of love or infatuation, if not madness. When he arrives, which is always unknown, he steps out of the chaise and is under the porch of this magnetic castle in a twinkling ; so that no one can see him or form the least opinion who he is, whether the Pope of Rome, or one of his cardinals, in the character of nuncio or father confessor, to absolve her of her sins, if so beautiful a lady can be said to have any. Be he who he may, he is not known, and

when there, in the fairy regions of the terrestrial paradise, how he spends his time is unknown ;— unless, indeed, he may be said to prowl the lawn or garden like another dragon, not watching the golden fruit of Hesperides, but more probably to guard lickerishly amorous or watering mouths from the prepossessing lady we have been speaking of. More than this I know not concerning him, with the exception that I think I have heard of his being her guardian ; and that he was or had been in Parliament, and, consequently, must he considered what the villagers call a Parliament man. But whether he comes here to study the good of the nation or consult his divine oracle, as another priestess of Delphic mystery, is unknown ; and what the purport of his business is, more than to see and converse with a beautiful woman, I am perfectly unacquainted with. He is never seen about the village—as he comes, so he leaves ; all is privacy, and has been, so I am told, for the last six years.”

“ Amazing, quite amazing ; I merely called to satisfy my curiosity, and I have it now more excited than before.”

“ I can give you no further information, Dr.

Doubtful, excepting that some call him Mr. Nobody, and others again, with more attention to probability, Mr. Somebody."

"And a very natural cognomen. At all events, I would have had a name if I were him, if it had been d——n."

"Good morning, Ardent; but stop,—I had forgotten to ask you how gets on physic, does it use you well? Better physic others than yourself was always my maxim."

"That system called prevention of diseases, Dr. Doubtful, is better than cure at any time, and is the maxim I hold to the community, but very few follow it."

"When you come to my age, Ardent, you will dislike physic as much as I do. It has not used me well, although I must not complain very much either. So, farewell, and may you physic all the knaves and fools in Christendom, for they want physic, and strong doses, or I am deceived;" and so saying, this moral worthy bid adieu to our hero and left the house.

"This man," said Ardent, after his departure, "is peculiarly eccentric;—an old man, on the verge of the grave and jealous of another old

gentleman, that certainly should or might be better employed than conversing with a woman of Mrs. Freelove's character. She certainly must have made herself as agreeable to them as she formerly did to me, or they would not be so anxious for her society. She is not a remarkably clever woman either, but there is a certain nameless charm or magic influence in her society that seems to bewitch all her votaries. I believe her influence must proceed from the gullibility of mankind, each willing to suppose he is the favourite lover he would have himself to be; while she allows each one to deceive himself in his own way, as may be most agreeable to his own imagination or preconceived habits of life."

It was thus Ardent reasoned with himself, endeavouring to tranquillize a mind that was ill at ease; for the lady, when not receiving the society of her Uncle or other friends, occasionally rode, walked, or drove by the house of Ardent, and as constantly endeavoured to see him again, as much so as if she had not fallen out with him or he with her.

CHAPTER X.

TIME rolled on, the Reverend Dr. Allworthy was about to leave the forest, and the Reverend Mr. Aimwell to succeed to the rectory.

Ardent still continued attentive to his own affairs, and was prosperous; but to escape so easy was not the intention of the lady. It is true he was no longer the tool of her charms, the pioneer of her captivating prepossessions; no, it was the sentiment of a past affection—smothered, but not subdued entirely; it was compassion he felt for her, for her proper want of discernment in what was right. He beheld her pass his window to and from church on a Sunday as heretofore, and of late she appeared to be somewhat relaxing in her resentment against him. It was in this apparent tranquillity that two months passed away; they were no longer considered as enemies, but friends at a distance; they did not visit, neither was it supposed that either of them bore any

animosity towards the other—they appeared more restrained by the recollection of past quarrels, than from any recent resentment. Things were in this state of apparent tranquillity, when the village, one dark night, was thrown into the greatest consternation possible, by the village crier, or bellman, going his noisy round, tolling his great bell. It appeared to be, as it was in the dead of night, the clamorous harbinger of desolation, accident, or distress. It was midnight, a gloomy, murky, foggy, dark night, at the hour when spirits are said to walk the heath, and fairies dance the ring—when goblins have more or less influence over the imagination of men, women, and children ; it was at this hour that the bellman of the village rang his well-known brazen goblet, to call the villagers from their repose.

The population, like a flock of sheep, true to their bell wether, popped out their heads from their windows, and many a granny and child were seen that night in their night-caps, for there was just light enough from the bellman's lanthorn, to reflect both up and down the village—men and maidens, and those of all ages, put out their heads from house and cottage, as by one spontaneous

revolution. Indeed, if they had heard the ram's horn of Jericho or Jerusalem, they could not have been more effectually roused from their slumbers; and our hero, Ardent, with the rest—the tassel of his night-cap dangling in the wind. Wives, husbands, widows, etcætera, were aroused from their dormitories of soft repose, to thrust their heads into the midnight air, and inquire as with one discordant voice, “what was the matter?” that they were now solemnly appealed to, at that lone hour of night.

The bell still rang on its dismal peal, as if heedless of the calls of the foresters, for it was in the centre of the village that this solemn grumbling of the goblet's clapper reverberated from the roofs of the house-tops, the walls, and from the hills, which, though distant, groaned back the dismal sound by echo, as if the peal of many bells in succession rang the changes of distraction, disturbing with awful portent the cottagers from their repose.

Such a state of alarm could be more easily conceived than described; some asked if the village was on fire—others again, if there had been murder committed—others, what robbery—and some

again thought the world was going to be at an end. What a picture of distressed feelings this would have been, had Hogarth's pencil sketched the group, as they presented themselves to the astonishment of each other, both natives and travellers, who by chance were lodging in the village for that night. The villagers at length ceased their vociferation, and the bellman silenced his midnight thunderer. All was still; not a whisper or breeze was to be heard, for a few seconds; and in that critical moment, a solemn voice, as if from a sepulchral grave, issued forth the monosyllables "O yes! O yes! O yes! this is to give notice, that a bag of bones have either stolen or strayed, and whoever has found the same, and will bring them to the inn, shall be handsomely rewarded."

The curiosity of the inhabitants was now excited to know what bones, whether human bones, or those of brute beasts. Ardent, upon hearing this discussion prolonged to an unseasonable length, thought it wisest to pull down the sash of his window, and adjust his night-cap again for the night, and try to sleep soundly until the morning.

The following morning disclosed the whole business, with the reason for disturbing the village at such a late hour of the night, exciting the suspicion that some of the inhabitants had lost their senses.

So truly does one folly engender another, and the axiom holds good to this day, that one fool will occasionally make many more; and so it proved upon this occasion, for Drinkhard, the drunkard, had lost his wits, and was easily excited, when under the influence of liquor, to do or say anything dictated by those fond of spree, as it has been termed, or a laugh at the expense of other people, and which happened upon this remarkable occasion, for there is always a degree of romance, or burlesque humour, in every man's composition, let him be ever so grave or dignified a character, and the lower and middle ranks of society have their follies like their betters, and from the want of a real masquerade that night, invented the low humour and jocularly of trifling with the sensibilities of all good people, who were retired to rest, rendering them subservient to their amusement, at that hour when bats are abroad, and owls and ravens croak the nightly

watch, for none other was customary in the village.

The day before had been a day of merry-making and fun, at the inn, in consequence of the sale of Drinkhard's effects by public auction, and a very small occasion will serve to create mirth, in a village peculiarly disposed to jocularity and laughter, where they have little else to think of, than to enjoy themselves, as they call it, at the cost of each other's private feelings.

Drinkhard, from drinking ten pints of beer in a morning before breakfast, lost his senses and his practice at the same time, as well as his floating cash; and his household goods and effects had, consequently, been brought under the auctioneer's hammer.

Ardent attended the sale, and bought many things; among other articles, a copper coal-scuttle, for which he paid one pound fourteen shillings, which cost only fourteen shillings when new, and that fourteen years before.

The auctioneer, a crafty knave, took advantage of our hero's ignorance, and ran him up, as it is termed, by artificial bidding,—no unusual thing with the trade, and making him pay for his ex-

perience, as many others had done before him, and as he himself has repeatedly done since, upon different occasions.

It must be recollected that Drinkhard had married a descendant of the great Lord-Chancellor Bacon. There were two sisters descended from that great man, in the direct line, as was affirmed. The eldest of the two ladies married a medical gentleman, who established himself in the country, and when he commenced practice, took with him the sources or subjects from which he had in part derived his anatomical information. At the death of their owner, these anatomical preparations had been brought to the forest, and with them came to reside the widow of the practitioner, with her sister, who had married Drinkhard, then a creditable man. The preparations were deposited with Mr. Drinkhard for safety, security, and useful purposes, as that of refreshing the mind or memory of the said Mr. Drinkhard, for he was then, as before observed, a steady, sober, and respectable man; but he at length became intemperate and in the course of time lost his wife, when he gradually sunk into greater intemperance, and finally was what is termed sold off, for the diff-

culty was to find a purchaser of the bag of bones, as they were termed. Ardent bid for them, but his bidding was rejected, and as the suspicion has since been entertained, for the wanton purpose of disturbing the midnight slumbers of the inhabitants of this hitherto comparatively peaceful village. The preparations were of little value, as from want of care they were fast crumbling into dust, to mingle again with their parent earth.

It was doubtless for the purpose of exciting an alarm in the village, that they were detained unsold, by the auctioneer, and a few other bacchanalian companions, by way of exciting in the credulous part of the inhabitants such a state of timidity and consternation as would eventually terminate in cause for laughter, among those who stood in the back-ground of the bellman's lantern, witnessing in the shade the excited astonishment of the villagers, and eventually laughing aloud as soon as they perceived the effect they had produced from their own folly and mischief.

Such are the fooleries of public-house excitement, the wreck of one man assisting to sustain the lives and absurdities of others. But who had the bones was the next inquiry, and as the murmur

was becoming aggravated by conjecture, Ardent stepped forward, and related how they came into his possession, which was in the following manner:

While reading in his parlour on the previous evening about ten o'clock, just before he was preparing to go to bed, a loud knock was struck on his door; he opened it, conceiving he might be wanted, when he perceived a sack to be stationed upright against the door-post of his house. His curiosity induced him to look round to see who could have placed it in that position, but he saw no one, and lest it might create scandal by being found at his door, he took the bag of bones upon his shoulders, and conveyed them to his turf-house, and having thrown the sack on the turf-stack, left it there for the night, until owned the following morning, when it was claimed by the party before named—the auctioneer and the publican, and to which vocation may be added sinner.

The supernatural agency was thus accounted for by Ardent, as far as himself was concerned, but not so on the part of the cunning and ribald middle men who had headed the conspiracy

against the public peace. The anatomical preparations and skeletons were finally deposited with a respectable medical practitioner, about ten miles from the scene of this mock tragic representation; so that, at no subsequent period, were they ever heard of, or are again likely to disturb the peace and tranquillity of the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XI.

WE will now, with our readers' permission, bring another of our heroine's worthies in *propria personâ* upon the stage, at the same time introducing him as the husband of our former acquaintance, the fair and forward Mrs. Lovely. This gentleman combined the various callings, professions, occupations, or whatever they may be termed, of banker, wine-merchant, estate-agent, &c., in a country town, within a hundred miles of the metropolis; but we will not take the liberty of intruding our opinions or conclusions on the patience of our readers, by giving a formal description of his character, but leave them to form their own unbiassed judgment of his principles from the conversation which passed between himself and the wayward lady of our history, which we venture to think will still farther prove that she was not always very fastidious in her selection of associates, and this was one of her most confidential. Seated together in a state of the

most social familiarity in the house of the lady, we now behold herself and the worthy gentleman of many occupations ; and as they were both aware of each other's failings and difficulties, their conversation was perfectly open and unrestrained, for neither of them could possibly disclose anything which would injure him or her in the good opinion of the others. "Do you know," said the lady, with an air of perfect nonchalance, "that I have not succeeded in passing one of your notes: they are not considered of more value in this place than waste paper, for people say it is too far from your county town, or the metropolis, where they are negotiable, and who is there to change them in this place?"

"How very unlucky!" said the banker, "for I am just now in want of a considerable sum. I fear you have not taken all the pains to get these notes passed that you might have done ; have you spoke in a high tone of my unblemished respectability of character, and talked loudly of my immense riches, which made my notes even safer than those from the Bank of England itself?"

"No," replied the lady, laughing ; "I have not, nor will I, for it requires all the strength of my

ingenuity in endeavouring to support my own character, without being burdened with the still more desperate task of striving to uphold yours."

"Ah! Mrs. Freelove, I see how it is: you have embarked in too many prohibited and hazardous speculations of your own, to allow of your acting the part of a faithful agent to me; but really, as I before remarked, it is cursed unlucky that I should be out of cash just now, as I have a grand scheme in progress."

"Indeed! and may I hear this wonderful production of your fertile brain, by way of judging if it is likely to prove as hopeful as the bank-notes in question?"

"Yes, you shall hear it, for this is a more stupendous production of my calculating faculties than any I ever before conceived; and now what say you, when I tell you that it is no less than a scheme to pay off the national debt? Now, don't smile and look so incredulous, for I tell you the thing is feasible."

"Oh! I have no doubt of it at all, my wonderfully clever friend,—I have no doubt that it is as feasible and as likely to take place as the payment of your own debts."

“ No bantering, saucy madam, for I do assure you, I never was more serious in my life. This is no crude and hasty-formed idea, but one on which I have pondered, meditated, and calculated through many long nights, as well as days, and at last, after tremendous toil, fagging, and labour of the brain, I have brought it to a demonstration, and I have not the least doubt that it would prove the saving of millions to the public purse, besides discharging all the private creditors of loans ; indeed, so confident am I of the extreme eligibility of my plan and its sure success, that I am going to lay it before Parliament, as speedily as possible.”

“ In the likely hope, no doubt, that some of those millions you speak of will be transferred to you. Ah ! friend Busy-brain, I fear this scheme will be as unproductive as its predecessors, emanating from the same notable contriver, has been ; but pray tell me, have you conferred with any one upon your wonderfully sagacious expedient ; but why do I ask so unnecessary a question, for how could I suppose that so vast and patriotic a scheme could remain within the boundary of your already crowded mind ?”

“ Yes, I have indeed communicated my project, and to no less a person than Colonel W.; and notwithstanding your ridicule, fair madam, I do assure you, he thinks the plan feasible enough, and it is to be brought forward during the next meeting of Parliament.”

“ Nay, then our nation must become prosperous indeed, when such sapient and honourable persons as yourself are admitted as one of its advisers; but nevertheless, your patriotic views and intentions shall not want my good wishes, and I hereby consecrate them with a glass of the excellent wine which you so liberally supply me with, although sometimes, while I am sipping it, I cannot suppress a sigh, when I not only think of what an unprofitable customer you have in me, but how much more so your wine-merchant has in you; indeed, it is something like a double burden upon my conscience.”

“ Upon my word, madam, you improve astonishingly in the science of wordy attack and hardy impudence; but, however, let me advise you, whenever you feel such unnecessary qualms of conscience rising in future, that you will hurl them down again by an extra glass.”

“ Which excellent remedy, I suppose, you frequently adopt ; and much, no doubt, to the profit of your wine trade. Ah ! I fear that the banker and wine-merchant are sad partners to the estate-agent ; but you have not told me how they prosper in their different callings, burdened as they are with their worse than sleeping coadjutors.”

“ Oh ! as to the estate-agent, I have ‘ rich and rare ’ news to tell you of him : you must know, then, that a gentleman employed me to sell an estate for him, and a very pretty compact estate it was, as we in the professional line say, well wooded and watered ; the price of it was fixed by the owner to be seventeen thousand pounds, and what my ingenuity could get beyond that sum, I was to pocket as a reward for my own adroit manœuvring ; and will you believe it, when I tell you that old mother Fortune was for once so propitious to me, that I sold this very estate for twenty thousand pounds, and so clearing three thousand pounds at one swoop ! There now, what do you think of me for a contriver ? ”

“ I do not know yet what to think, till I have it a little more confirmed ; but pray, how happens it that, with such an astonishing proof of Fortune’s

favour, you should be so in want of money ; surely, you cannot have expended the three thousand pounds already ?”

“ Why no, I cannot say that I have been quite so extravagant as to have spent that sum, for to enlighten your understanding a little more on the particulars of the affair, I must inform you I have not yet received it.”

“ Well, well, there appears to be no difficulty at all about the business, for you have only to request the purchaser will not delay the payment, or that he will advance a few thousands, and he will no doubt readily acquiesce.”

“ Umph ! I am not quite so sure of his ready acquiescence ; and indeed, I am equally uncertain as to when I may actually expect to receive it.”

The lady here cast a penetrating look at her companion ; then, shaking her head, she said : “ I am convinced here is some mystery, or what my friend Ardent would say is the same thing, some roguery in this affair, and I very strongly suspect that I shall discover the baffled knave in the estate-agent, as well as in his precious helpmates, the banker and wine-merchant. But come—let me hear all the particulars of this enterprise, which,

as far as I can understand, seems anything but achieved."

"Why, I must confess that my genius is somehow too exalted for the sanction and approbation of common minds, and as I deviate from the beaten track through which steady honest kind of souls are contented to plod on, they take it into their wise heads to condemn my crooked motions, as they term them, and accordingly set me down in their own minds as an adventurer, and that merely because I venture out of the old beaten road; but, however, I would not mind their censures, if I could get this three thousand surplus, which, to tell you the truth, my urgent necessities require I should receive immediately."

"Poor man! you are much calumniated, no doubt, but you have not yet told me the particulars of your management in this affair. I want to hear what sort of generalship you have made use of, before I can form my own judgment; so now for your plans and contrivances."

"Oh! they were very simple, for I had calculated on the pliant disposition of my man, although, by the bye, he has more of the mule in his disposition than I expected, as you will say,

when you are acquainted with the transaction. In the first place, then, I must tell you, that in the same county which I honour by residing in, and between twenty and thirty miles distant from my place of residence, lives an opulent miller, and no sooner was I assigned agent for the disposer of the estate, on the terms I told you of, than I immediately turned my thoughts to this man, and resolved that he should become the purchaser; in the first place, because I knew him to be in possession of a sufficient stock of the ready, to make him under all circumstances a very suitable and desirable man to deal with, and in the second place, relying on my own abilities to lead him by the nose like a bear, and calculating somewhat confidently on his easy resignation and willingness to be so led. I took horse and rode over to him, when I quickly succeeded in obtaining his confidence. I then talked of the estate which was to be disposed of, swore it was the finest for its size in all England;—nay, I continued, the whole world may very safely be challenged to produce its equal, or one so desirable in every respect. I then extolled it, puffed it, commended it in every way I possibly could think of; then vowed that my

Lord such a one, and Sir Simon Somebody else, with the Right Honourable Mr.——— bless me, I forget his name, had applied to me in the most anxious and eager manner, each vehemently begging to become the favoured purchaser, and offering large sums for it, which (said I, persuasively,) I have had great difficulty in evading for a time, for it was my earnest desire that such a pearl of a place should only fall into the possession of one whose exquisitely discriminating taste and liberality of heart and mind would allow of his fully appreciating and doing justice to it. Finding that I had made some progress towards training my docile animal in the way he should go, I endeavoured to improve the advantages already gained by participating with him in his convivial habits. I therefore smoked till I was half suffocated, and drank to the health and happiness of the next possessor of this inimitable and unmatchable estate. This joviality completed his confidence, and I had no cause to be dissatisfied with the beginning I had made, for you must know that this was but the first act of the piece I had sketched out for performance; the second (and as I had hoped the last) act consisted in inviting my

exquisitely discriminating and liberal friend to accompany me to London, which bait he quickly swallowed. When there, I took him to a coffee-house, and made him as drunk as a fiddler; then dexterously bringing forward the subject of the estate, I succeeded in convincing him that he could not do otherwise than purchase it; and as this was what I had expected, I had provided for it accordingly, by having the writings already drawn up, and as it was not my purpose to allow time for consideration, I watched for the proper moment, and hooked my fish before he could return to his mill-stream again: that is, I obtained his signature to the deeds, and my landlord of the hotel was witness;—was it not snug and well managed?"

"I cannot say till I know the result, which I suspect my friend will not terminate quite so well for your three thousand expectations as you imagine; but, however, go on with your narration of unsuccessful roguery."

"Upon my word, madam, you give rather expressive names to small specimens of ingenuity; but, however, next morning, I found that the animal I had taken so much pains to train, had

become restive and unmanageable, and refused to ratify his bargain, saying he was drunk when he was inveigled into it, and rather than agree to it in his sober moments, he would stand trial; so I must end my performance by going to law with him, that's all."

" Ah! friend slippery, take care your performance does not partake more of the tragic or serious nature than the comic, for somehow or other your ingenious roguery does not always turn out so very successful in the end; but pray what is your own opinion of the termination of this threatened law-suit?"

" Why, I cannot think of more than two ways in which it is likely to end, and those are, either the miller must pay me the twenty thousand pounds, or I may be sent to Newgate, merely for an act of generosity. Oh! the ingratitude of this world! send a man to prison for generously giving a fellow an excellent carouse."

" Ha! ha! ha! really it will be a crying injustice to punish you for so honest, open-hearted, generous, and liberal an act; but really there are some kind of men who cannot be persuaded to view these sort of virtues in the light you would wish

they should, and I should be not at all surprised, if you were to find some of those odd-notioned beings among the jury who will have to inquire into the particulars of the transaction."

"Ay, and the fogies will punish me for the fellow's want of skill in making a bargain. Oh! that talent should be so discouraged, while stupidity goes unpunished."

"And oh, that knavery had not been a little less confident, and a little more cautious! Really, after all, Mr. banker, &c., I think you have not shown any extraordinary cleverness in this affair, but, on the contrary, have exhibited the bungling awkwardness of a less experienced practitioner; indeed, I am not sure but that a trip to Newgate may be of service to you, by making you a little more sharp-sighted and cautious, and by so doing, may prevent a more public exhibition at the Old Bailey, at least for the present."

"Thank you, madam, for the extraordinary candour of your opinions, and it is only surprising to me how one so cautious in all affairs of a questionable nature as yourself, should have managed so ill as to become known in the way you lately have, and if I were inclined to pay compliments

of the nature you have so liberally showered on me, I should say that a little trip or visit to the Magdalen or Penitentiary would assist to restore some of those appearances of sanctity and morality which you have so unseasonably discarded; but I will spare my comments on your transgressions at present, and speak to you of another little affair of my own. You are aware that I was left guardian to a young man, whose fortune was eight thousand pounds: well, as I was in a large way, or rather in large ways of business, I required more capital than I possessed of my own to carry it on, and therefore, by way of improving the young man's fortune and prospects at the same time with my own, I proposed we should open a banking-house in our joint names."

"Poor young man!" said the lady, with an air of pity; "but go on,—I need not inquire, I believe, about the success of that hopeful concern."

"Why, I believe, madam, you have already formed a tolerable correct estimate in your own mind of its condition, but there is one little circumstance, I fancy, you are ignorant of, and that is, I had expended six thousand pounds of his money

before I proposed the banking concern, which will decide the fate of the remaining two thousand and rid him of the ticklish job of taking care of money by easing him of every shilling."

"Really, this is carrying your roguery too far, and proving rather plainly that you have not one atom of conscience left. Upon my word, I cannot help commiserating the unfortunate young man. I would not have the sin of it upon my conscience for the universe."

"Why no, Madame Innocent, I believe it is not exactly the mode in which you would have proceeded; yours would have been of a more circuitous nature: you would have ruined his principles and peace of mind first, and his fortunes afterwards,—in fact, you would have destroyed both body and soul. Now mine is a more harmless description of injury, for as it is, he has no sins to repent of in the affair, for what sins there are fall on my back, and he will perhaps gain that virtuous humility, which eight thousand pounds would have been so much in the way of his acquiring."

"I tell you what, Mr. Banker, you are the most heartless sinner I have among all my acquaint-

ance, and that is making a strong assertion, for they are composed of a choice set of hypocrites and reprobates; but tell me, can nothing be done to save this poor young man from ruin?"

"Why yes: if you would have the Quixotic kindness to give me a draft for the sum minus, it would save him from being injured by the transaction; besides, you know, as charity covereth a multitude of sins, we may naturally conclude that a sum of that magnitude would not only cover all the sins you have already committed, but pay for a licence to go on afresh. What say you, madam, to my proposition?"

"Why, that it is as impudently extravagant as the person who made it: besides, had I to repair by payment all the roguish tricks you have been, and while life lasts will be guilty of, the dangerous gift that was conferred on Midas would scarce suffice for so doing; but I must confess there is some appearance of a curb being shortly put to restrain your mischievous motions and prevent your overturning the fortunes of his majesty's subjects."

"Indeed! and how is this wondrous feat to be accomplished?"

“ Oh! simply by restricting your erratic motions about the country in quest of prey, to the great peril of rich millers, &c., and which restriction may be easily accomplished;—merely by shutting you up in that very Newgate you just now spoke of, for I think you may calculate somewhat more safely than you are in the habit of doing, that before long you will take a lodging for a season in that universal hotel.”

“ Pray don’t boast, madam, of being the first to foretell this very probable circumstance, for even my own lawyer uttered the prophecy, directly he became acquainted with the circumstance, and declared that all he could say or do for me, was not at all likely to avert it; so, you see I have been prepared for the worst, and am aware that I must take the consequences of my enterprise. But I have now another little piece of intelligence to communicate.”

“ What, more roguery? upon my word you are a zealous candidate for the honours of Newgate.”

“ A little more mercy, if you please, and not quite so much haste in your judgments; for in this affair, you, madam, have not been quite so blame-

less as to prevent your being somewhat implicated as an accessory."

"How so, Mr. Casuist? Explain yourself, and, if possible, in a plain, intelligible manner, for as you are aware that I am no stranger to your character, you must know that your usual glossing and equivocation are thrown away upon me."

"My dear Madame Lucretia, why this lecture? You know I am bound to speak the truth to you, if I lied to all the rest of the world; besides, why should I try to impose upon you, when we have agreed to discard our masks the moment we enter into each other's society, as we wear them only to deceive the public. But to my story: you must know that my beautiful wife, who visited you last summer, has eloped from my house, and left me, her disconsolate husband, to fly to your pretty ladyship for comfort, which I hope you will bestow without murmuring, as I do not require a great deal of it."

"Indeed, I believe you; but tell me, did the lady go alone?"

"Oh no, she was accompanied in her expedition by a young man, who had been an apprentice

to me. Go alone ! no, the tender-hearted soul was too mindful of my welfare to have been guilty of such an improvident act, for by so doing she would have known (to make use of an Irishism), that I should not gain anything but her loss, but by taking a noodle with her, she kindly gave me a hint of what I had to do, which I, like an obedient and provident husband, have adopted, and have accordingly commenced an action for damages."

"Upon my word, Mr. Brazenface, I know not how sufficiently to admire your unblushing assurance : first of all, by your conduct, you drive your wife from her home, and then impudently seek to be paid for so doing ; really, you are such a scientific amateur in wickedness, that I fancy myself almost an angel, when compared with you."

"Then let it be a fallen angel, madam, and I will not accuse your fancy of taking too lofty a flight. You accuse me of driving my wife from my house, but, even if I had, I did not tell her to take the young man also."

"Really, this is placing the affair in a new-fashioned point of view : that is, seeking a com-

pensation for the loss of the young man's services, rather than your own domestic happiness with your wife. Then I admire your disinterested generosity in allowing yourself as many partners in a journey, or friends by the road-side, as you please, and yet expect that your wife should travel perfectly unaccompanied, except by her own virtue. But what does your lawyer predict in this case? does he say you will make your fortune by the immense loss of your domestic happiness?"

"Why, I cannot say he raises my expectations too high, even in that quarter, for he scruples not to say he is very doubtful of obtaining any damages, and certainly not more than a hundred pounds; and if so, I shall be somewhat indebted to you, fair madam, for the disappointment, for when a jury has to estimate the particular value of conjugal affections, they will very naturally inquire how myself and wife lived, whether upon terms of affection or not; and she says I have passed my time with you rather than herself. How she obtained that knowledge I know not, but I have no doubt that some d——d officious good-natured friend has given her the friendly intimation, and

if so, and it is brought forward, why then good bye to my respectability in every sense of the word, for among the fusty maxims which float in the brains and from the mouths of the upright fogrums of this world, there is one which gravely holds forth, that a wife should endeavour by all honest means to uphold the respectability of a husband's character; which may be all right enough so far, but then it is shackled with this condition, that the husband on his part should do all he possibly can to uphold the purity, integrity, and good principles of his wife; at least, so my lawyer informs me, and he farther says, that unless I can satisfactorily prove, that I have done my best to cherish her, comfort her, shield, protect, and counsel her, as well as never having placed her in the way of temptation, or exposed her to the seductions of this young man, I shall not obtain any damages whatever, and furthermore, that the costs will fall upon myself. Now, to prevent any thing so disagreeable, I intend pleading the various and incessant calls of business in my various and opposite callings and occupations, lay great stress on my excessively diligent appli-

cation to business, the numerous calls and urgent engagements of which unavoidably caused a frequent absence from home ; and as it is not necessary to inform them of the lengthened periods of my occasional absence, I think I shall easily saddle my rival with the expenses. Besides, I mean to talk pathetically of the agony of the heart, in thus having its dearest idol torn from the place where it was sacredly enshrined ; then speak in terms of indignation and insulted honour of the base usurper and robber of those affections, which were before devotedly attached to me alone, and the loss of which would cause me to pass the remainder of my days in solitary bitterness, and unceasing lamentations for the cruel, and, alas ! irreparable loss which I had sustained through the artifices of this base, unfeeling robber. Then making an appeal to the hearts of the jury, solemnly assure them, that pecuniary damages to any extent could never compensate me for the injury I had sustained ; at the same time implore them to show their indignation, by visiting the atrocious conduct of this fell destroyer of domestic happiness with heavy damages, and that more as

a punishment for the outrage he had committed, than as any possible compensation or atonement to me. So there, madam ! what do you think now of my plan ? don't you think I shall obtain from this Solomon something of more value to me than what he has had the good-nature to rid me of, rather than rob me of ?”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! Mr. Banker, I cannot help smiling at your fancied ingenuity ; but let me tell you, that you may again find yourself deceived in your calculations, notwithstanding the unconscionable tissue of lies you intend bringing forward to support a cause where plain truth alone would condemn you. Pray, has it never entered into your sapient head, that the opposite party is likely to bring forth that truth in so forcible a manner, as to refute all your specious pretence of feeling, and by so doing increase the odium which, independent of that, is so justly your due ; and I will candidly tell you, that in my opinion, your beautiful wife both can and will afford such important information to the counsel of her gallant, as will effectually justify her conduct in separating from a husband who was perpetually

deserting her arms for those of another. Such usage was not to be endured by any woman possessed of the least sensibility. All this an able counsellor will depict with such pathos and energy to the jury, who are generally apt to commiserate the injured and neglected wife, especially if she is a beautiful woman like your captivating runaway, that it is my solemn belief they will visit your negligence as it deserves; and with how much," said the lady, laughing, "do you think?"

"Gad! I don't know; but, after your disheartening remark, I should not be surprised, if they were to curtail the damages to two thousand pounds, although I had before led myself to expect five thousand, at the least; indeed, upon second consideration, I still think I shall receive that sum, if he is able to pay it; if not, I must endeavour to content myself with the former sum."

"Ay, Mr. Financier, and something less, for unless I widely err in my judgment, the jury will estimate with more certainty the actual loss and injury you have sustained in your domestic branch of business, and will, in consequence, award you

the honourable and respectable damages of one shilling, or if they think that too extravagant, there is such a coin as a farthing."

"Nonsense, Mrs. Freelove! you cannot be in earnest, you surely are bantering me."

"Indeed, Mr. Architect of such fine castles in the air, I am not bantering you, I am only clearing away some of the mist, that you may perceive on what very unstable foundations your buildings are erected."

"Then I fear it is indeed all over with me, for if neither straight ways or crooked ways will obtain money, the poor fellow to whom I am guardian is poor indeed, and I shall be a bankrupt instead of a banker, which will be about the finishing of him as well as me."

"Poor fellow, indeed! and so he would be, if you were in possession of the riches of Peru, for I verily believe that whatever of value descends to your pockets, although not belonging to yourself, never returns from that Charybdis, to be restored to its real owner; and as for the fortune of this unfortunate young man, it was certainly doomed the instant it entered into your fostering and disinterested care."

“ I believe you are not far out in judgment, and I cannot help thinking what a fool his father was to leave me sole guardian and protector of his child’s interest after his death ! Why, I cannot take care of my own, and so my angel of a wife thought, I suppose.”

“ Angel, Banker, did you say ?”

“ Yes, angel, for if she is beautiful, is not that one of the principal qualifications of an angel ?”

“ Not exactly so, I believe ; and was Ardent here, he would with great gravity inform you, that it is impossible for a woman to be an angel without an immense stock of modesty, virtue, and I don’t know how many other sober qualifications, while the Reverend Dr. Allworthy would seriously insist that she could not be an angel without that most necessary of all necessities, a devout and sincerely religious heart.”

“ Well, well, be she an angel of light or darkness, is of very little signification ; but what I was about to observe, when you interrupted me, was, that an idea seemed to have entered her mind that I was incapable of taking care of what I had left ; therefore, like a careful, considerate wife, she has thought proper to take care of it for me, or rather,

to relieve me from the care of it, has taken all my loose cash under her own management and protection, and carried it with herself to some other place of security."

"And a very praiseworthy specimen it was of her prudence, for she undoubtedly foresaw the very great chance you had of passing some months in Newgate; and thinking that in so confined a situation you might very well dispense with money and wife, she relieved you of both beforehand, with the considerate intent of breaking to you by degrees the fate that awaits you, and that you should not lose those two good things at the same time you lost your liberty. Upon my word, I admire the prudence and spirit of the step she has taken, and had I been in her situation, I should have done exactly the same thing, only perhaps, at a much earlier period, for such was the treatment you really deserved. Ah! you will find a six months' imprisonment of wonderful benefit in giving you time for reflection on your misdeeds, if not for repentance."

"A very Job-like comforter to a man in trouble, upon my word, madam; and you might have added that, by the time I regain my liberty,

I shall not be in the most enviable situation in the world, for I shall be without money, without an estate, without a wife, and without a character."

"Why, as to the last-mentioned article, it is my opinion you cannot be much injured by the loss, what little there is of it remaining; for you have not been overburdened with it for some years past, and it is very evident that the present complication of *honourable* difficulties will rid you entirely of its very small remains. Really, your affairs bear so hopeful an aspect, that I think, under existing circumstances, you had better make your peace with God, and pray that you may prosper in the next world, as you have been so much out of your calculations in this."

"O, you unmerciful gipsy! what, preach my condemned sermon to my face, and that too before I am sentenced! Why, you unconscionable jilt, is this the way you reward your votaries of pleasure? first of all assist in ruining them, and when that is all but accomplished, recommend them to seek the shortest way to heaven, and ask forgiveness for those very sins which you have been the chief cause of their committing? But do you know that it is my opinion that the repent-

ance of a sinner is of small avail, or perhaps I should make a beginning ;—then there is another difficulty, I should not know how to set about it. Really, I fear my mind is too hardened in sin, or as your Reverend Dr. Allworthy would say, scared with a red-hot iron. By the bye, how do you and that earthly apostle go on? are you as strong cronies as ever? ha! ha! ha! he was fond of piety, and you gave him a liberal dose of it. I hope you have not surfeited him in his own way, for religion I consider to be like love,—too much of either is good for little?”

“O, we are not upon the very best terms—he wishes to control me in having a friend to sleep in my house occasionally.”

“He does, does he? I know a way to cure him.”

“How? I shall be glad to hear.”

“Why, instead of fretting, fuming, and crying about such an affair, as to-morrow is Sunday, you shall take hold of my arm, and we will walk boldly and face the lion in his own territory, although he is the king of beasts. We will go to church and bid him defiance. Such effrontery he will take to be a proof of innocence—you then

establish your character and mine at the same time ; for, being a married man, he will not have the impudence to suspect me of transgressing the seventh commandment, which says—‘ Thou shalt not commit adultery.’ ”

“ Ay, you are a perfect Joseph ; your sanctity is inimitable ; and I will not be so cruel as to deprive you of a part of your garment, as Potiphar’s wife did of old, to prove her outrageous chastity.”

“ Well, then, to-morrow we will go arm in arm, like man and wife, and who shall dare to doubt the purity of our motives ? ”

“ Amen ! the good preacher deserves consecration, and, as queen of my domain, I now consecrate you Arch Primate of the same.”

“ Your mock majesty has made one forget.”

“ Name it.”

“ I am more likely to wear my canonicals in Newgate than in your pavilion, unless your immediate interference prevents the disgrace that will attend my holy function.”

“ Enough of foolery, I am too sorrowful for farther bantering on your situation and for mine. I dare not jest any longer upon the subject—Ardent and Dr. Allworthy, I fear, will be too

strong for both of us; they seem resolved to rout me and my visitors out of the parish. But I dare them both to do their worst—a nice little trap I have laid for Ardent: I want to entangle him once more before I die, and then to punish him for bringing me to a premature grave. I find my health declining daily; at all events, I do not feel as I did when I was first acquainted with Ardent, for he has so harassed me by his suspicions, that I feel really ill. I am not so anxious to live as I used to be. I want to provoke him to call me a bad name, then I can place him in the Ecclesiastical Court; but this cannot be obtained from him until I have harassed him by previous litigation, false prosecutions, and civil actions, until he is weary and sick of my very name. I will teach him to doubt me in future, and call me a name from the fifth chapter of Proverbs—and a Milwood besides: he has only to call me by one more name, then I have him at my mercy.”

“ And pray, Mrs. Freelove, how do you mean to accomplish all this ? ”

“ By pretending illness, work upon his sympathy, and he will then, upon the principle of huma-

nity, wish to save me from a premature grave. It is then my time. My ingenuity, with the aid and counsel of lawyer Rapine, will do the rest."

And so saying, the conversation of the worthy couple ended for this time—and to trace them to their further avocations would be by no means to the edification of the reader.

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN it is recollected the good his Majesty does in these realms, particularly in the forest from which this work derives its name and the immediate neighbourhood, by employing many hundreds of poor people and giving food, by honest industry, to thousands, we cannot be surprised that he is so idolized as to be thought not only the monarch but the parent of his state.

And those who are more deeply informed in the manners and principles of kingdoms will perceive the immense difference between having a good king on the throne of these realms and such a monarch as Tiberius was, who ruled over the Roman empire. For the particulars of his diabolical reign, it is only necessary to refer the reader to the perusal of Tacitus, the historian.—So that, if we even admit our kings to have a few foibles—and what man or men have not?—they may be excused, even by the sourest critic or censorist,

when it is contemplated the vast injury they might do the people, under the form of law or otherwise, and the good they are known to perform; making their name not only respectable as gentlemen throughout this forest, but through the world. More able panegyrists than their own actions are unnecessary, for they are or ought to be far superior to the greatest eulogiums from public orators and writers.

But, to return to our friend Ardent.—His perseverance in the attempt to reclaim the former idol of his idolatry was the most singular contrast to good sense and rational principles that we have yet had occasion to relate of him; the principles of humanity ever tingling in his ears, like the sound of Bow Bells to Whittington, inciting and exciting him to renew the charge of reclaiming his former mistress; incredulous, as he still was, to the full extent of her demerits, which were, if possible, further receding from the path of rectitude, and that honour which is the noblest ornament in the British fair,—I mean, female chastity.

It was not in the power of any man to save her, unaided, as she was, by good principles in herself, and stimulated by evil counsellors. Her species

of madness consisted in her violent resentment and wish to ruin Ardent, for he was still disposed to extend the helping hand towards her, even in the last period or pretension to respectability, and after she had ceased to become an object of sexual enticement or bewitching influence over him. The renewed attack upon Ardent's peace of mind and fortunes was well premeditated; it was to induce him, on the principles of humanity, to call again to see her.

Her charity overpowered and silenced many rumours and appearances against her; she was as diligent in attending her church as ever, with the omission of the communion service, from which she was excluded of late by the Reverend Dr. Allworthy. Perchance she might have been pleased with the opportunity of showing her pretty person and modest demeanour before not only the parson of the parish, but the whole of the congregation, including a noble individual whom these pages, for propriety's sake, does not mention in a direct manner, but with respect for his virtues and liberality to the poor and industrious peasantry of his neighbourhood.

This noble individual always bowed respectfully towards her as she stood up in her pew, as a recognition of her respectable deportment and modesty, previous to her quarrel with Ardent. It also gave her an opportunity of showing herself to the village maidens, in her coming to and going from the church, as a person in an elevated station, as well as to receive tokens of submission from those obliged by her bounty and condescending kindness: for every merit has or should have its reward sooner or later, and demerit the same, which will be sufficiently evinced in these pages.

We have before remarked, it was her practice occasionally to visit the poor as well as contribute to their comfort. In her attendance at church she had the opportunity of being seen at her devotions, and a humiliating posture to a beauty during her prayers is supposed to have additional effect upon the beholders. Then, again, the young, amorous, and high-born individual before alluded to, when on a visit to his country residence, always paying to her beauty such respectful obeisance and recognition as he passed

to his pew and on his return, might, in part, have assisted to blind the worthy pastor of the flock, in her prosperous days, and cause him to bestow on her the respectable appointment of patroness to the Sunday School, and whom he, no doubt, thought would make so good a use of that important trust. And when he made her known to the respectable inhabitants of the parish, before he left the village, it was done with all the caution of a gentleman, at the same time with all the firmness of a minister of the Church of England; who, finding himself in danger of being seduced, with the whole of his flock, endeavoured all he could to make her residence in his village disagreeable to her. And for this change in her conveniences and respectability, the whole of her anger fell on Ardent, who yet once again extended his hand to save her after the Reverend Dr. Allworthy had left the village; and this opportunity she neglected, which was the cause of her final ruin as well as that of her son.

Dr. Allworthy was of the opinion that she could not be reclaimed, which Ardent could not be fully persuaded of, particularly as she was now in a sinking state of health, and evi-

dently affected by the blow that the Reverend Dr. Allworthy had aimed at her, by making her known in the village as a dangerous syren, who, under the simplicity of apparent innocence, was undermining the peace of the district by her pernicious principles and practice.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PRIVATE "mistress," as it is phrased, is always more to be dreaded by families than public unfortunates; as they are enabled to misguide the mind by those false appearances of modesty which mislead the ignorant and uninformed in the artifices of women of a certain description, and thus enable them to rivet that confidence in their virtue and honourable principles that it is very difficult to dispossess themselves of afterwards—their own integrity assisting the delusion.

A common woman of the town may be considered a public pest and a public nuisance, but not so destructive to the peace of private families, as before remarked, as the Epicurean wanton or mistress of some great man; who, sustained in splendour, is enabled to assume those airs and graces that beguile the incredulity of the unsuspecting or least suspecting, and, when too late discovered, it is too late to recede—the

mischief has been accomplished, and the final overthrow of every manly virtue is to be apprehended.

Three months had scarce passed away since Ardent communicated with the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, and that short space of time had produced an extraordinary alteration in the appearance of Mrs. Freelove. She was no longer the voluptuous woman who had stimulated him to madness, as well as to reject the counsel of his father for the purpose of placing his affections upon her. It was now a different feeling that urged him to save her, and that was humanity, compassion, and consideration for her helpless and deplorable state: all the respectable inhabitants of the village appeared to have treated her with incivility and even with rudeness—could he endure to see it, and recollect he had brought her to this state. It was a painful conflict he held with himself; he was really sorrowful and meditative on the forlorn situation to which he had reduced her; again his unhappiness of mind returned and produced the following reasoning, while pacing backwards and forwards in the parlour of his own house.

"It is now three months since I conversed with this hapless, helpless, and unfortunate victim of depravity. She passes my house in her chaise, and looks into my window, as much as to say she does not forget my counsel. But, oh! how altered she has become: she is now very thin, as if worn away by inward grief. She is no longer the widow of enticement and infatuation for whom men have been made fools, and myself in particular; I scarcely know her countenance again; she has forcibly felt the blow I struck, and I now lament sacrificing her upon the altar of my resentment—but could I do otherwise and see others fall victims to her licentious principles. The removal from her of the patronage of the Sunday School has overthrown her constitutional powers, both in body and mind; she has a vulture within, termed an uneasy conscience. I cannot think she is harbouring revenge, as that would totally wreck her peace and cause her final overthrow. I think her unhappy, and fancy she is inclined to reform, while her apparent unhappiness increases my disquietude. Occasionally she walks before my house, as if she wished to speak with me; I rise up in tumult

and behold this most unhappy woman ; it is then I say to myself, have I no pity, no compassion, no feelings of commiseration left within me for this wilfully silly woman ? I have a very great inclination to speak to her, but I dare not ; her griefs are in part my griefs, for they have in some degree been occasioned by myself ; therefore I sympathize with her in her calamity. Had I not fallen into error, she would not have been ruined ; by leading me into the way of temptation, she has paved the way for her own destruction. I am undone in peace of mind, but she in peace of mind and bodily health also. Her beauty is fast decaying away, and her fortune, as I hear, is becoming the prey of harpies. Such are the consequences of deviating from the paths of innocence and propriety, and from the paths of peace and religion ; which, and which only, secure happiness here and the immortal crown hereafter, as my good friend, the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, used to say. Her afflictions trouble me : I was the best counsellor she ever had—I would I had found her a virtuous woman ; but finding her otherwise has caused her ruin. I am still her well-wisher, although secretly—yet I

speak of her good qualities and try to forget her evil propensities ; flattering myself that, as she has had time to repent, she is not now deserving of reproach. I think I may at some future time risk a conversation with her, if it was only to ascertain if she is an altered woman—if she is, I will make it known to the world, but, if not, I will retreat from her with all the precipitancy I would from an enraged woman, for such she now is, in the opinion of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy. And let me consider, am I not showing a luke-warmness for religion and morals by again attempting to reclaim her? But the grave appears fast preparing to receive this once-prized mortal ;—she who could pamper the appetite, inflame the heart, drive reason from her votaries, and lead her numerous lovers like galley-slaves fastened to the oar, or happy in being chained to her chariot-wheels and whirled at her caprice ; or like Phaeton driving the chariot of the sun, urging them as steeds to the goal of passion, by raging tumults planted within their breasts. Never far short of madness could they escape from her toils and midnight orgies, as voluptuaries of the banquet in the idolizing of their principal divinity, the mistress

of the feast, the president of bumpered toasts, drank in honour of Venus, Bacchus, Cupid, &c. Unless she has discarded her evil counsellors, she is lost beyond redemption: piety and prudence are now her only friends; she had banished them from her house, and, if they are not returned or soon recalled, it will be too late, and she will fall the victim to retributive justice, which appears demanding her for its prey. She has braved the friend inclined to save her: I have shown her the gulf beneath her feet, but folly has beckoned her forward, and she, hearing the tinkling of his bells, has been walking in his train, and, if not speedily reclaimed, will fall, never to rise again. The first time I meet her, I will venture to give her still further admonition—I will again apprize her of her danger, and, although I know full well it is attended with peril to myself, I will again extend my hand to save her from that premature grave that is preparing to entomb her, and prevent, if possible, the archfiend of human kind from triumphing in her calamities. She strives to hide from the world and its inquisitiveness her wretched state of mind, torn as it is into remnants. Her spirits are gone, are fled, as harbingers of her

immortal soul; the frame only remains of what she was, and that as a walking shadow. Myself, an attentive observer of human nature, can see the inward workings of a disordered mind and unquiet conscience; there is a something on her spirits she wishes to disclose, but what that is, it is beyond the power of my divination or conjecture to ascertain. I will speak to her as to a walking spirit, and say, as to one from another world, What preys upon your inward peace, producing such an appearance of disquietude? If she is well disposed, she will inform me, as the ghost of Cæsar did the daring Brutus, when it said it would meet him again at Philippi. I apprehend she has been striving to reconcile inconsistencies, and the conflict has been too severe: it required a firmer breast to brave the billows of disordered passions, which would necessarily be in contention with the voice of reason. Reason sooner or later will be heard, and if she is not now prepared to hear it, will overtake her before she dies; for it is a voice from heaven, it sounds in the wilderness as well as in crowded cities, and as a whirlwind uproots the most fixed principles of immorality, impiety, and injustice.

Sooner or later she must attend to its dictates, and why not at the present moment? For her own sake I hope she has heard its voice, but if she has not as yet attended to its warnings, it will resound like thunder in her ears, ere the period of her dissolution finish her transgressions. She that was once beautiful, is now so no more; she is no longer an exciting object of fitful passion, whose votaries reside in the court of Cupid; she is no longer the enchantress of bewitching illusions—that vision has passed away. She is now rather the object of avoidance, for with her lost health and departed spirits are gone her charms of infatuating and delighting those who beheld her. She is not now the object of solicitude to the lover: his eyes are open, his vision is fast improving, his mental ideas of beauty she no longer realizes. By what other principle does she now, then, occupy his thoughts? Humanity is the principle, and humanity shall yet save her or perish by becoming her victim. Infatuated man, dare you thus brave your evil destiny? and dare you again exchange a word with this abandoned profligate, as the Reverend Dr. Allworthy has made her known to you. Forbear! nor dare

to outrage heaven's decree to the falling sinner that repents not; neither does she relent, but seeks your ruin in revenge for her own. She has ceased to be the source of contention to hot-blooded youth, and she now appears to be preparing for her last earthly couch. I used once to take comfort in her counsel, for it was then at least seemingly pious, and I thought her most lovely, but those times are gone by, never to return; her happiness was then mine, and I foolishly thought mine was hers; but, alas! such is the mutability of sublunary things, time passes swiftly on: it is now in appearance years since I last conversed with her; even then she was an infatuating woman, notwithstanding the ungovernable anger she displayed, and the outrage we mutually bestowed on each other, the one in insisting upon disagreeable truths, and the other in rejecting them and spurning the giver. These indications of tenderness are a proof there is remaining a small portion of an inextinguishable passion, which will no doubt burn itself out as a taper by the hand of time. By the way," said Ardent, interrupting his reverie, "there she is, walking on foot to her devotions at the parish

church—pious lady! as I hope she is now become, she looks this way—she smiles and looks pleased—she has given me a nod of recognition—ah! now she has just passed my window. But stop, let me consider—what said the Reverend Dr. Allworthy? ‘Stand you not in the porch, when the avenging angel of the Lord slayeth with a mighty sword.’ I must believe that good man, and yet I dare not see her sink into absolute ruin without making one more effort to save her before it is too late, or, at the least, satisfy myself that she is really deserving of that good man’s awful indignation. It is dreadful to see her gradually descending into the tomb, step by step, till the grave closes over her. She is evidently descending as another Juliet. (I wish I could say she was as virtuous) to the tomb of the Capulets. I will dare once again to save her; I will approach her awful house once again, and give her warning that she has no time to lose, death is fast gaining ground upon her, and it is time to repent, relent, and improve her ways. She appears to me as if meditating some great action,—I hope it is not revenge that she is thus nurturing within her bosom, while it is consuming, like a vulture, her

inward peace. Surely she will now listen to the dictates of reason, for that will give her firmness to brave the storm, while religion will purify her heart by recalling it from the affections of this world to place it upon those of the next. It will readily be perceived that such reasoning as Ardent indulged in was gradually preparing his mind for another interview with this extraordinary woman; and, as it indicated, so it happened—whether the needle was attracted to the pole, or the pole to the needle, is immaterial, but it laid the foundation of further mischief to Ardent.

CHAPTER XIV.

ARDENT sought the opportunity of meeting the lady in the fields as she came from church ; it was the afternoon of a fine day. The conversation commenced by Ardent observing that he did not know whether he ought to be more surprised or grieved to see her look so ill, and it was with real sorrow he beheld her so much altered of late. The reply was—

“ It is all your doing, Ardent ; I was once your friend and you mine, but time has altered us both. I have now no other friend than God, and him I will serve, and to him I look for comfort. My poor head frequently aches as if I should go distracted. You must have a hard heart to use me as you have done : I hope God will forgive you, as I do.”

“ I am very glad, madam, to find you are so thoughtful and considerate ; your attention now appears directed into proper channels,—I hope those of piety, virtue, honour, and happiness,

which are all so nearly allied, that you may yet recover your lost peace, and be an example worthy of imitation."

"Ah, Ardent! you little think what I undergo on your account, of the happiness I have lost, and that felicity which used to be my boast is now no more. Alas! nothing prospers with me now. I am sinking fast into ruin both in mind and fortune; all is comparatively a blank; I have lost every enjoyment, and all temporal objects now cease to please me; my happiness will, I hope, be hereafter."

"Nay, madam, you are too desponding. I argue as I used to do some time since, when your presence used to give me very great pleasure,—that is, if you respect yourself you will be respected. And as to the loss of the Sunday School, let it at least appear you would have been worthy of it had it been continued to you, which will be some mitigation of the disappointment. Be not an enemy to yourself, then all respect will gradually and almost imperceptibly return."

"Ah, Ardent! you little know what this heart of mine undergoes,—it is ready to break; and

when I am gone you will think of me. And I now foretell what you little expect, that you will never be happy again: when once a man has loved as you have done, he never recovers that cheerfulness and hilarity of bounding spirits which used to characterize you when first you were acquainted with me. You will never forget me; depend upon it, you never will."

"Nay, now, I apprehend you are gloomy, and want cheerful society; allow me to call and take my tea with you; your being so ill and reduced in health will remove all suspicion of an improper tendency. I will say I found you ill and I endeavoured to be of service to you, an act of humanity due to every individual, let them be who they may, while life lasts. I will come and see you in my medical character, and as an old friend rather than as a former lover. A little rational or general conversation will do you good, and prevent that destroyer of your peace, an unquiet mind. Resentment has its limits, and I cannot suffer you to sink without one more endeavour to save you, now the Reverend Dr. Allworthy has left the village. Humanity is a part of religion; it tells us to save all those that will be saved. I do

not feel easy under the idea of having destroyed you, without making a still further effort to redeem you in part, if not entirely, to the world. Human nature is infirm, imperfect, and prone to error ; indeed, every allowance is to be made to human nature, particularly where it professes to rise again. Could your health be restored, your happiness might again return ; your constitutional powers may rally, and you may think and act differently to what you have done, and become an honour to society and a blessing to your son, who will require all the good counsel you can give him. You are melancholy—I will rally you out of it ; and, as we have been once friends, we may be so again, upon your making some alteration in your conduct.”

“ Not this evening, Ardent, but to-morrow evening I will hear what you have to say to mitigate my afflictions ; for they are not to be borne with much longer. I find I am dying, and shall soon cease to exist ; there is one thing I am very anxious about before I leave this world, and which my friends have advised me to do.”

“ What is that ? can I promote it or facilitate it in any way ? all I can do I am willing to do. I

will call this evening and take tea with you ; at the lawn door you may expect me. But we are now near the village, and it may not be so well for us to be seen in conversation together at the present moment ; so excuse my now leaving you. Farewell !”

“ Farewell, Ardent ! you will never see me again ! Farewell ! remember my words—farewell !”

“ Say not so, Mrs. Freelove ; possibly something may be thought of to arrest the will of fate, if not of Heaven. I only take my leave of you for the present, but not for ever—so, adieu, till I see you again.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE former lovers had met and parted after a three months' separation, and it had been well for both had they never met or that they had not met again; for then the Reverend Dr. Allworthy's prophetic opinion could not have been realized to the extent it was eventually, as will be seen before the close of this history, proving to a demonstration the counsel of a good man should not be disregarded. The lady, on her return to her own residence, set about devising means to ensnare Ardent.

"I see I have considerable influence over him yet," she said; "he thinks every one as open-hearted as himself—generous to a fault, never suspecting evil until it overtakes him: this is the consequence of his philosophy—moral philosophy, no doubt, unnecessarily daring every thing in search of principles, as he calls them, to relieve suffering human nature, which I fancy will end in himself becoming the sufferer. It must be con-

fessed he is worthy a better fate than to try his experiments upon me, but I will be his chymical apparatus no longer, to sublimate his truths and develop his principles. I am a different person to what he supposes me to be, and that he will find before I have done with him—the event I dread to think of, but it must be: it is now my turn to seek revenge, and bring this proud man down to the same level to which he has reduced me. There can be no doubt but I have a considerable influence over him yet, and that influence shall be exerted to destroy him: all my friends, except my Uncle, have advised me to lay a trap for Ardent, and catch him as a lion is caught in the toils or within the meshes of a net—it is his own contrivance, a better opportunity I could not have, all I have to do is to improve it. And now, ye demons of revenge! assist me, and ye are welcome to my last guinea; only consent to aid me in the ruin of this proud and independent young man, independent in principles, not in cash, or he should never have escaped my snares. Neither shall he now until his mental faculties are destroyed, or he has publicly committed the last insult a woman can receive; then a retributive

justice awaits him, and I must now or never drive him on to the slaughter of his own reputation, before I can reduce him so low as to become my victim. I cannot last long, I am very well aware of that, and this attempt of his to re-establish my health or my tranquillity of mind is what I have been so anxiously seeking for. He is still ignorant of the world, but I will teach him a lesson he will never forget, no, never;—a Milwood! and not contrive to ruin him? He shall not call me by that name with impunity, although the Reverend Dr. Allworthy did. He is as heedless and inconsiderate as ever, notwithstanding that respectable man told him never to come near my house again: I hear Foresight has told him the same, and, if he will not be counselled, he must smart for his enterprise of folly; for to think of reclaiming a woman of my standing in the ways of the world, is a farce he will repent and regret having undertaken, in a most agonizing manner. The trial will benow who shall sink the other first, or which shall succeed in first driving the other from the village, he or me. I have been too long accustomed to a gay life ever to end it but with my death, which I find is fast gaining ground of

me. I have persuaded Ardent it is through him, when it is, in fact, the course of nature, worn out by a too free and unlimited indulgence in animal pleasure, which is the only and true cause of my sinking into a premature decay. He affects to save me on the principles of humanity ; I want not his humanity, I want revenge, and the present opportunity will answer as well as one longer delayed. Finding he was inclined to come this evening, I baffled him, which was the surest way to rivet him to his purpose. Now then for a state policy worthy of Machiavel himself :—my house is a man-trap, let him beware of its spring-guns ; the middle bolt of the glass-door shall be my spring-gun ; I will fasten the door with that one bolt instead of three, he will think nothing of breaking a pane of glass to open it, then I have him at my mercy. A myrmidon of the law has already offered his services, and I will avail myself of his prudent counsel, for, doubtless, he is fully acquainted with all its chicanery, but his chief task is to obey instructions from me. All by nature are free ; if it is doubted, witness the animals of the desert, the birds of the air, and the fishes in the sea : but man, man only, has established

shackles for his convenience ; he it is confines woman to his dominion, at the same time he roams himself at large, and the hapless woman dare not complain of the infidelity of her husband, but smile upon him when he returns from his truant errand, and embrace the destroyer of her peace. If man makes woman a sacrifice to his convenience, what can be expected but a retaliation of evil for evil, as horn for horn, until they mutually more resemble the stag or goat, than bear any longer the stamp of human principles or resemblance. We are informed by himself, though, that man is a god—a cuckold god he may be, and so was Vulcan. If men will set us the example of infidelity, I can see no reason why women should not be equally privileged to secure the same admiration from the men as the men from the women. The same reasoning holds good with regard to wives : if married men will seek loose women, what should prevent the wife seeking abandoned and profligate men ? The obligations, both human and divine, are equal ; God does not prohibit woman more than he does the man, or the man more than the woman. Marriage is a civil compact between two individuals

of opposite sexes, for each of their benefits, as it is said, and also that of their children. The ties of celibacy, as due to virgin purity, are the same; they cannot be invaded with impunity. Wise men, knowing the perversity of the human mind, and the nature of human character to appropriate that which is his neighbour's to himself, very wisely instituted the law of marriage, to protect the maiden from the seductions of the spoiler and worse than midnight robber; for he is the assassin of her peace, and I for one present myself before an avenging God for the injury done to me. The compact of man with woman, as it is now managed, is precisely on the same principle as that which governs him in the purchase of his horse, and among the rich it is the same by a wife: he marries for an heir to secure the estate in his family; that accomplished, the obligation ends; he then seeks his pleasure in the choice of as many women as he can maintain, and the lady too frequently does the same by the opposite sex. This is a system of morals getting into high fashion and repute—mention a great man, who, with his stud, but has also his mistress to provide for, as well as his wife. The fortune of the wife too commonly

pays off the incumbrances upon the estate, while the agreeables of life are sought for with the mistress only. By revenging myself on Ardent, I revenge myself upon the sex : he is innocent in comparison with other heary sinners and protectors of concubinage, revolting to the compact of the marriage vow. It is for the purpose of turning the tables that engages me in this enterprise ; revenge is sweet, I admit, but to revenge myself on the sex is extasy—it is worthy of my ambition as an insulted and injured woman. To reform the male monsters that make a prey of pretty women, would be my glory ; but for that purpose I must make a great example of Ardent, who will retaliate the injuries I do him with interest. I could not have selected a better or more persevering champion to vindicate the cause of the female sex, female honour, purity of principle, and, above all, an adherence to the marriage vow. But, ah me ! I ramble—I wander—I scarce know what I say or do, I am so rejoiced and so confounded. By art I must now achieve what I cannot do by reason or force : my piety made Ardent my friend—my piety and person, combined with art, made him in love with me—and now his compassion towards me

shall destroy him. If he comes to my house but once again, he is my victim; I will tantalize him with seeming good-nature until he breaks the glass, then he is mine; the law lays hold of him, and its iron grasp—let him escape from if he can. My plan is laid—the particulars to be practised against him time and circumstances must disclose, for I am not sufficiently experienced in my new character to pourtray them; but I doubt not they would form a pretty melo-drama upon the stage of public life;—it is my intention to exhibit them in private life, such as no common actress, of the part I mean to play, could exceed or even equal. And now I wait for my hero.”

CHAPTER XVI.

By way of diverting the reader's attention from machinations the most consummate, as intimated in the last chapter, and to relieve the mind from the painful contemplation of human infirmity and human wickedness, we will draw the veil for the present over this incomparable woman, good in nature, perhaps, but spoiled by luxury, adulation, and indulgence. Education should form the barrier against the immoral practices of the age; and from education is to be expected that amelioration of the condition of the poor, making them more independent in mind than to become subservient to others' vices, who, however independent in fortune they may be, have no right to tyrannise over the prostrate poor; and humiliate them to the condition of the brutes.

The goods of fortune are bestowed for benevolent purposes, or ought to be, and not for the vices and corruptions of the great, or to administer to luxury and effeminacy, immorality and

depravity. The poor lady, in the last chapter, did not complain without reason. Her resentment may be excused on many principles; for when the mind and heart are embittered by adverse fortune, it is the usual expedient to resort to the solace of revenge or retaliation, early or late; and it is often the attendant of a great mind neither to brook insult, injury, contumely, or contempt.

That Mrs. Freelove was a lady of peculiarly excited feelings must be admitted, and our hero was, no doubt, in many respects an imperfect character; too many there are of his stamp, for he had his failings, which were but too numerous. It is difficult to correct the moral principle when once placed wrong in either sex; those who know human nature best, know that a prudent early marriage is often preferable to continued celibacy, as it removes the opportunity or inducement to seduction, which attends the votaries of the amatory deity. But as this is intended to be a complete chapter of digression from the lady and gentleman of this history, we will record an adventure, or rather a ludicrous story, which passed between our memorable Mr. Ardent and the

clerk of the parish, who, although a very good kind of man, was a very weak one in mind and intellectual attainments. The clerk of the village parish church was a man of consequence in his way, as most clerks of parishes are. He was a small farmer, gardener, gravedigger, sexton, and bellringer, with many other occupations and pursuits, which he sustained with becoming dignity; he was, withal, a considerable stammerer in speech, so that he may be said never to have uttered three words without a debate with himself whether he could proceed or not with the remaining part of the sentence. But, however, by dint of confidence and long practice, he usually got through the responses after the clergyman with tolerable correctness, and his being a known good man made up for little impediments in the delivery of his amen and other singularities, peculiarly the attendants of his exalted station in the church, when obstructed by the defects from nature or a very bad enunciation from childhood.

This portrait of the honest countryman and forester is the more necessary fully to understand the merits of his reasoning in the present chapter; and if the clerk of the parish was so erudite,

what might not the poor of the village have been before the foundation of the public schools so frequently mentioned in the former part of this history. That the superstitions of former ages are not passed entirely away, may be deduced from the narration of the profound state of the honest clerk's mind, in regard to spirits or ghosts, which he firmly believed in, notwithstanding the enlightened good sense he frequently heard from the pulpit above him.

The attempt to pourtray stammering in writing must be difficult to imitate in any one in particular, for there are as great varieties in imperfect speech as there is usually to be found in imperfect conversation generally. So that the reader must adapt to his own ear the peculiar cadence or obstruction of words that he thinks would do justice to the respectable delivery of the worthy person spoken of, who, from giving out Psalm tunes and other attendants of office, may have been considered to be well initiated in vernacular sounds, which to attempt describing would be attended with injustice to the individual, and therefore I leave him to the mercy of the reader's imagination and previous conception.

His elocution not being of the worst description, neither could it be called the best.

Ardent introduced the discourse by making the following inquiry:—

“Who did the bell toll for this morning, clerk? I presume it must have been for some one at your end of the parish.”

“Don’t you know, sir?” said the stammering dignitary.

“I really do not,” replied Ardent, “or I should not have had occasion to ask you.”

“Why, Mrs. ——— died in childbed.”

“That I did not know before, clerk; poor woman! I heard she was very ill and not expected to live.”

“There are some very curious circumstances belonging to it, I can tell you,” said Clerk, with a look of sagacity.

“What are they? I have heard of none.”

“But I won’t tell you, for I believe I maunt; or I would, that I would, with pleasure.”

“You deal in mystery: if there is any circumstance improper to be communicated, I have no curiosity to know it.”

“I know, but I don’t like to tell.”

" Well, well, as you please," said Ardent, at the same time going on. But he was not to depart in such happy ignorance.

" Stop, sir," said Clerk, " will you keep the secret, if I tell you? for it maunt be known."

Ardent smiled. " Proceed, proceed, my friend."

Clerk then began with an air of mystery : " You, sir, know as how she lived in the public-house."

" Yes, yes ; her husband keeps the Fighting Hens."

" Well, it is so ; and she lived with him till she died."

" Wonderful, really ; but proceed."

" But you maunt tell, sir," said Clerk, lowering his voice to a whisper ; " she was possessed !"

" Possessed ! possessed, Clerk ? I do not comprehend you entirely ; you speak rather ambiguously ; your story is a riddle, which yourself must solve, for I cannot."

" Speak softly ; speak softly, sir. I thought as how I could not speak to a better gentleman than yourself in such a strange business."

" But first let me hear what you would speak to

me about, for it seems to be beyond your comprehension and mine too, at present. Take your time: when you hurry yourself, you are not explaining the story you intend to relate, so much as you perplex it."

"Why, then," said the village Amen, with a great effort, "she died possessed with a spirit, that she did; and that's the truth of it."

"With a spirit, Clerk! I hope with a good spirit, to God and man, from having performed her duties like a true Christian."

"You don't understand me; no, that you don't. I say that she died with a spirit, that she did."

"Did we live three centuries ago, your present information would, perhaps, have obtained for you a ready belief. But to talk of spirits now, in the nineteenth century, proves you to be very credulous; but we have all our weaknesses at times."

"It is as true as you stand there," said Amen.

"Either you are not serious, Clerk, or some person has imposed upon you, and told you the story to amuse you, that you might in your turn amuse other people."

“No; I am not given to joking.”

“I believe you to be a very honest man, Clerk, but you are now a very mistaken one.”

“So, sir, you do not believe in ghosts and witches?”

“Not in the least, never having even thought of them since I was a child. Then, indeed, I heard of many spirits who walked the earth after their heads were off, and some with their heads under their arms; but I believe in nothing of this kind now, only as poetry or prose run mad.”

“You think, then, there is no occasion to speak to our minister to lay the spirit.”

“Certainly not; you dig the grave, toll the bell, repeat the responses, and you will have done well; fill up the grave when the coffin is interred, and you will have discharged your duty to God and man, and this poor woman also.”

“But how is the spell to be got rid of, which sits night and day, as I am informed, upon the bedstead.”

“Who is the author of the spell?”

“Old Mother Patter, on the green; she cast a spell, and, as I was told, cantered upon a broomstick nine times round the room.”

Here Ardent's patience was exhausted, and he commenced his banter by saying, "Aye, and then she walked and looked, and walked and looked again, as nine times round she went; she smoked her pipe, then quaffed the smoke, and through her grinders spoke, saying,—

‘A spell should be
On yonder she,
With that put on her cloak;
Her tattered gown
With straw she bound,
And the raven hoarsely croaked.’”

Here Ardent could not help smiling at his own effusion; then, assuming a serious look, he said, "You are yourself bewildered, Clerk, or demented, as our northern islanders call being mad."

"No, no; I hope not."

"Neither is the body of the woman bewitched. Incantations now are not believed, and witches and wizards are completely out of date with all but the ill-informed: you will be laughed at as a zany, and you will excite the boys' ridicule, mockery, and jests; so say no more about such a foolish affair, and be wiser in time to come, than to believe in the inventions of fools or knaves."

"But what is to be done with the old woman; they say there is no hanging or drowning a witch, for she has as many lives as a cat?"

"Let the old woman alone, and she will most likely die a natural death, like yourself."

"I be most afeard, though,—I be most afeard," said he, shaking his head. "Good morning, sir," and the simpleton, touching his hat, departed.

This communication is from a real occurrence, with very slight deviation; and such is the credulity of human nature, that where ignorance prevails, superstition is certainly its attendant, and cruelty the necessary consequence. To be sure, it has been said, — 'Where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise;' on that principle only can it be justified. But then the difficulty is to prove that ignorance is bliss, when thousands of instances can be produced of its evil consequences to society: an informed peasantry cannot be degraded and kept in such servile subjection as an uninformed one; to be ignorant is to be reduced to the lowest state of bondage, for the servility of the mind is far worse than the restraint of the body;

neither are the convulsions of society likely to be so frequent or violent, dissipating the angry feelings in various effervescences, so as to give the timely check or control to the abuse of power. Was each poor man to have a portion of the various waste lands in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, he would soon make an orchard and garden of it, enabling him to keep a cow and pig, and maintain his family without becoming chargeable to the parish; and this they will have when they cease to be ignorant, and are governed by reason instead of superstition.

CHAPTER XVII.

As soon as Ardent broke off his conversation with the lady, his former acquaintance and friend, he walked in another direction, unobserved : for very sufficient reasons, he did not wish to be seen walking through the village with her, after the considerable disagreement that had taken place between them. He had gone very great lengths in imprudence, in risking again a conversation with his former seducing mistress, and he was really very anxious to reinstate her as much as he possibly could in society ; but there was a fatality that could not be surmounted. He was to try the fates, chances, or Divine Providence, once too often.

The man who undertakes a hazardous experiment, whether in morals or physics, should be well fortified with reasons of probability, that the event will be successful, and compensate for the inconveniences attending the experiment.

Inconsistencies have their use as warnings, or

rocks to be avoided ; they are the charts and landmarks traversed by others, and although the first experiment may be attended with danger, yet it smooths the way for all after-comers in the same pursuit, and they may avail themselves of the benefit of experience, if successful, and avoid the same course, if the reverse.

“ This is a sort of Columbian voyage of discovery,” said Ardent, “ a sort of invasion of no man’s land,—pregnant with danger, and more calculated to be first undertaken by a searcher or experimentalist in moral causes, than to be reasoned upon *à priori* before the experiment has been tried. If I am successful,” said the sapient simpleton, “ I improve her health and mend her fortunes at the same time : a slight regulating of the mental faculties like a clock, if formed perfect in itself, will suffice ; there are certain springs of the mind requiring as much regulating, and that frequently, as the most celebrated pieces of mechanism, either in clock or watch-work. To such I compare the frail lady I am about to visit,” said the hero of this history, who was truly thrusting his head into hot water ; or, as the Reverend Dr.

Allworthy would have said, 'into the den of the lioness.' "

But not so thought our hero, who had some of the spirit of gallantry belonging to the olden time, when knights adventurers were common to protect the beauties whose cause they espoused, by challenging all Christendom in their defence; indeed, it appears no exaggeration to state, that our friend Ardent was the last of that worthy race, so much regretted and lamented by ladies in these degenerate days, when nothing is ventured but the most carelessly impudent, or rigidly formal address, as regulated for them by their parents, preceptors, or tutors. But not to sneer too much at prudent counsel, it would have been more to the purpose, if he had debated still longer upon the step he was about to take a leap into: a bramble-bush, or a heap of stinging-nettles, would have been elysian groves, to the inconveniencies he appeared likely to sustain in this unequal conflict, not of art to art, but folly opposed to artifice. A cat catches a mouse by springing on it;—a lady has her trap, a bolt is the impediment—the lady, the bait.

We will now argue for our hero in a serious way, if ludicrous folly admits of any apology; and to begin, we might say, were all men to be cautious and timid, human life would stagnate; nay, it is contrary to the preservation of human life upon the large scale, and if our Hero's inconvenience is a public benefit, he may have been styled the Leonidas of this dangerous pass to a lady's bower, and himself the victim, to save his countrymen.

It was the selecting of himself for the dangerous experiment, in preference to another, that showed the honesty of the act, or at the least proved he had the valour to undertake that which was never achieved—the reclaiming a really vicious woman. This was about the sixth attempt he had made, and had he succeeded, he would have been deserving of immortal honours from his countrywomen. And the authority of Scripture vouches for there being more rejoicing for the recovery of one hardened sinner in Heaven, than for ninety and nine innocent individuals; so that, to say the least, his rewards hereafter, had he succeeded, would probably have been immense. Indeed, to the credit of our hero be it spoken, he did ulti-

mately prevail in convincing her she had been following wrong counsel, and that he was her friend, and had she heeded his early advice, or even his last efforts to save her, she would not have been a lost woman.

This may be remarked of both: however much they misunderstood their own interests in the commencement, they both understood them eventually.

It must be admitted for the sake of argumentation, that very uncourtly phraseology has been occasionally made use of, as lioness, tigress, Milwood, and a name we will forbear to mention, through a delicacy to the sensibilities and nice perceptions of our readers,—such consideration is due by courtesy to the softer sex; but, as a reference to Scripture is not equally liable to the same objection, we, in the capacity of public functionaries of the work, direct the attention of the readers to the fifth chapter of Proverbs, for the solution of our allusion.

Now, such an assemblage of cognomens was excusable in the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, whose religious zeal in the cause could have been scarcely ever equalled, certainly not exceeded, and how

ever deficient this kind of acknowledgment may be considered, as an apology for our hero; yet, in the judgment of most readers, it will sufficiently plead as a justifiable excuse or extenuation for the worthy divine, exercised as he was in holy and pious callings, and denouncing as he did the thunderbolts of Heaven on the guilty sinners.

There is one further apology for our hero's undertaking this perilous adventure, so fraught with danger and hazard to himself, his reputation, and his interests: he had driven her upon the dangerous rock,—her vessel was all but a wreck, and he was resolved, if practicable, to remove her therefrom, or perish. Humanity aided his persevering ardour: he may have been supposed to be in possession of that enthusiasm, which distinguishes the hero and the madman from all others—too impetuous to be restrained—too resolute to fear, and too adventurous to be apprehensive of after-consequences. Like the veteran at the cannon's mouth, in our hero's case, success, or even the attempt at success, was meritorious, on the principle of humanity, that dares every thing, rather than flinch into cautious prudence, which

can look on and see others perish, while they themselves are safe.

Pusillanimity never yet made a hero, and our friend Ardent braved every thing. His first axiom was,—If he found any other individual with her, to leave them to follow the dictates of their own principles. And his second was—to ascertain if she spoke the truth, in her reliance upon Providence, and that there was neither art nor artifice in the apparent serenity of her late conversation, for although Solomon says, (and he was a profound and experimental logician) the ways of the wanton are past finding out, yet the event would prove, whether or not the sage moralist was in the right, or that there was an alteration in the human passions, within the last three thousand years.

These preliminary debates Ardent held with himself previously to embarking in the enterprise for the reclaiming her health, and restoring her peace of mind.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE will now do ourselves the pleasure of further illustrating to our readers the singular lady we have spoken of so much, and here we will premise an apology for any inconsistency she may be guilty of—nay, for both of our principal characters, for the peril and temerity in outraging propriety, and even common prudence, was equal in both, and the apology, or extenuation, is necessary in both cases; for sure such children's play, performed by adults, was never exceeded, showing that the folly of mature age sometimes exceeds that of childhood.

The lady, as before remarked, was on the watch for Ardent, and he, on his part, had fortified himself, as he thought, with a whole host of cogent reasoning, argumentative precepts, well-digested sayings, elaborate speeches, and axioms out of number; and had he been successful in the delivering of only one-half in his copious manner of narration, it would have occupied, like Cato's

speech in the Forum, the whole of the day until nightfall. But the fates, or fortune, prevented even the unpacking of one green bag full of either sayings, harangues, remonstrances, or any réprisaIs of wordy warfare whatever ; even the tenderest offices of friendship were prevented, and the enterprising Ardent met with a repulse in a novel quarter, and in a different way to what he had expected ; but this will be related in the sequel. Suffice it to say for the present, that our hero was thrown off his guard, and through mortified pride for the tricks played him by a complete actress of the deceptive arts, he stormed her castle—and thus, like an hero in the old romances, reacted those follies worthy of being ascribed to Don Quixote, when in the Duke and Duchess's castle, assailed by the maids ; or even the extraordinary achievements of Baron Munchausen. And such was his undertaking, that it might be compared to an attempt at restraining an invisible fairy in her palace of enchantment, for surely some invisible spell, or fascinating influence, must have come over his mental visions, when he fancied he could control the uncontrollable.

The lady wondered at his long delay—she had

time to change her walking-dress for one more elegant and attractive. She was again decorated for conquest, or at the least to make a livelier impression than she could have succeeded in, in her walking costume ;—in fact, to make her appear more interesting, and, if possible, more deserving of being saved from a premature grave. A beautiful woman is always an interesting object with mankind, and to a former lover trebly so—who was inclined to look over the past, in expectation of an amendment in the future.—And those who feel disposed to be censorious must recollect their youthful days, and grant to our Hero the same indulgence that he did to himself twenty years afterwards, when he reviewed the transaction with a sigh, and regretted, on both their accounts, that the counsel of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy had not been followed, rather than his own want of experience ; for, when too late to recede, he again found himself not a match for consummate artifice concealed under the appearance of a pretty person, set off to advantage by the most becoming attire.

She had been standing for some time at the glass door, looking on the lawn and pretty flower-

garden. The middle bolt was in the socket or staple—the spring gun, as she termed it, was prepared—the train of manœuvres had been deliberately planned—and she waited to execute, with promptitude and decision, those plans of operation for the betraying of her former lover, and reducing him to despair. In a half fretful impatience, several murmurs escaped her seducing lips, not made for stratagem and deceit, but for far nobler purposes. But the decrees of Divine Providence are past finding out; therefore, not to interrupt the narrative by digression, we will proceed onward with the lady's observations and comments on the protracted stay of our Hero. Stationed near the glass-door, was the captive damsel of this seemingly enchanted castle, for so it must doubtless have appeared to Ardent, or he never could have taken such pains to have reclaimed or redeemed an abandoned woman.

A lover's eyes are always purblind or moon-struck, or some fatality attends them, different from other people's; and so it happened on this eventful day, which decided the future destiny of his fortunes.

“I wonder what detains him?” said the lady,

peevishly, "but he is hesitating, no doubt, upon the propriety of coming at all. I shall not wait much longer, but give up the hope of seeing him this afternoon, for expectation protracted, or delayed, may be very well to practise on a lover, but not for the mistress."

"O, here he comes, and looking back at every step, observing if any one sees him. So, so, I find it is discreditable to be seen near me or my house—or why all this precaution? Well, well, you are coming, young gentleman, to meet the retaliation you deserve; and you shall experience a repulse you little expect. I will convince the neighbourhood I am still my own mistress, and not under the control of any individual."

Ardent, on seeing Mrs. Freelove behind the glass-door as he approached, began to exercise his reflections.

"There she is," thought he; "well, it looks like good-nature, to see her standing so ready to welcome me. I begin to think my suspicions were unnecessary and ill-founded. If there is any failing in womankind more excusable than another, it is that which arises from good-nature;

we all love good-nature in the female bosom, for on that depends man's chief solace and enjoyment. His reasoning faculties are likewise placed in full reliance upon that delicate attention and counsel which he can ill dispense with, for he is a solitary being, when alone."

Such was his reasoning, until he arrived at the lawn door, when the lady began the conversation.

"Hey-day, Ardent, what brings you now? I said to-morrow evening."

"Yes, madam, but it was spoken so like the mildest negative, that I took it to be an assent, and have preferred this evening, to convince you how anxious I am to restore you in the public confidence, and therefore earnestly request you will not make a jest of my solicitude to oblige you, and my endeavour to chase away your despondency and despair; for it is painful to perceive you falling off in health, and not offer even the advantage of my medical counsel for your restoration.—What, will you not let me in?—Then I conclude a little gentle force is necessary; some ladies prize the favours of their conversation at a high price, I perceive."

"I am all alone, Ardent, like a bird in a cage," said the wilful lady, by way of further stimulation and tantalization.

"It is not good for you to be alone, fair lady," said Ardent, recollecting a scripture phrase; and a little enterprise to gain access to your lovely person, you think, perhaps, is necessary to prove that the ardour of my former attachment has not entirely evaporated. If you wait for such proof, a small pebble from the gravel walk will decide my claim to your favour and kindness, for in a mental point of view I am nearly as unhappy as yourself."

"Not this evening, Ardent; to-morrow evening," said the teasing lady.

"Then, this pebble" said the irritated Ardent, "decides the discretion or indiscretion of my conduct; for I cannot consent to become the public jest through your bantering disposition."

"Not this evening," I tell you, Ardent; "come to-morrow evening."

"And why to-morrow evening, madam? I have passed the rubicon of discretion in entering your premises again, and must now positively converse

with you, for I cannot consent to recede as I came."

"You are too impatient of control, Sir; I must have my way to-day, and you another time," said she, laughing mischievously.

"Then this decides it," said our irritated hero, breaking the pane of glass, and letting himself into the house by withdrawing a single bolt.

The lady immediately ran away, calling out "Murder! thieves! robbery! a sailor man has broke into my house."

This Ardent was informed of afterwards, as the lady receded out of the front door, the instant Ardent let himself in at the lawn door behind the house; for Ardent, finding no obstacle but the middle bolt, easily pushed it on one side, thinking it was a jest, or freak of the lady, as children's play is sometimes practised by grown people, and he concluded this was a proof of her still having a wish to be thought a playful lady, with the antics of a kitten—excusable sometimes in beautiful women, and scarcely in them. On entering the house, like another Ulysses did the infernal

regions, he made the following comments and observations :

“ Here then I am, all alone, and the lady bird is flown. But there she flies,” said he (looking through the parlour window), “ like a frightened dove. I will now try to discover if she is all alone, or rather was, for here she is not. O, fickle fair one, changeable as beautiful ! Is it thus that Venus delights to teaze and tantalize her lovers ? first seducing them with the softest blandishments of art, and then leaving them to agony and despair ?

“ Here still hang the scarlet curtains, which painfully recall past scenes. Into this room was I first introduced, and in this room began my first acquaintance with the fair inhabitant of enchanting delusions ; but frail as fair, beautiful as seductive, and, I fear, as mischievous as frail. She then blushed as the damask rose, and which I supposed was a proof of her innocence ; but, alas ! time then and now varies in its tales. Ye chairs and tables, side-board and mirrors, all of ye bring to my recollection past joys, which ye were witnesses of. It was then I partook of nectar and ambrosia from the goblet’s brim, for all was happiness and

delight, but now mortification and despair, anguish and remorse. Ye were all old acquaintances, but of late have been strangers to my sight; and for why? Ah! there is the rub—there is the twinge—that my heart swells to think of, for it was more than suspicion that has undone my peace. I could shed tears of sorrow while I think of the conflict I have endured—painful remembrances they all are—

“ O lady fair, where art thou roaming?

“ The sun has sunk, the night is coming.”

Ardent walked into the drawing-room, and back again into the vestibule, when fresh recollections crowded on his active mind. “ Here I stand in the entrance-hall,” said he, “ as a monument of grief on the black and white marble chequered pavement, the mute witness of my despondency, and those agonizing feelings I cannot describe, without doing them an injustice; for they bring back to my recollection past happiness, those blissful hours that are passed, never to be recalled, but through the painful recurrences of memory or mental reverie; the constant follower of departed moments, such as when she crossed the hall to admit me, or let me out as her fa-

yourite lover, which was done by stealthy caution, for a lady's fair fame depended upon the privacy and secrecy of the assignation. It was a delusion, a vision, a dream, but I remember too well that they were realities for the time being. Mine is a blighted love ; an improper object has caused my fondest solicitude ; and what now can prove the end of it, but despair ? for I apprehend all future happiness has flown far enough away from me. As this, perhaps, is the last time I may be within these walls, I will renew my acquaintance with their silent inmates, as they have heretofore appeared to my infatuated senses, to welcome me into this fairy bower, with smiles of pleasure,—at least, so I fancied. Few have loved as I have done, even to the brink of madness ; and my remaining now within this deserted marble hall is a proof of it, and forcibly tells how disinclined I am to leave the palace of fascinating enchantment, but, alas ! the grave of my former delightful enjoyments.—All is vanished as an airy vision, and nothing now remains but these thoughts, which are but as the flitting shades of former happiness. These agitating conflicts of the heart, combating with the mind, proves anything but serenity and

resignation to the divine will, who has thus ordered and commanded me to leave her house;—the house of Messalina, or, as I have flatteringly supposed, the modern Aspasia, such as was the friend of Pericles. ‘But stop,’ says Reason, ‘nor pursue your delusion farther: you are an unhappy man, and the fair inhabitant of these romantic regions will prove your ruin; for, as you have destroyed her peace, her aim, it too plainly appears, is to hurl back the injury with tenfold vengeance.’

“I thought myself once the happiest of mortals, but find myself now the most miserable; a slight conversation would, perhaps, have soothed my anguished mind, as well as I had fancied it would her own—and as I fear she cannot live long, it would have been happiness to have even attempted to make her remaining days more tranquil and serene than they can otherwise be; for, from her violence of temper, I plainly foresee great inconvenience to both parties is likely to result, which will embitter her last hours with painful reflections, for having embittered mine.

“I require sympathy as well as herself. It is not passion now; it is wounded feelings in both. I cannot be as she would wish me to be; neither,

it seems, will she become what I wish her to be—respectable and respected.

“It is this very impracticable achievement, that adds to both of our misfortunes; we love what we hate, and, what is equally as inconsistent, hate the individual we love most. She flies me, and I am too proud to pursue. O woman, woman! there is something divinely fascinating in thy charms, that lures man onward to destruction. I have passed again your threshold, and must now submit to the will of fate, or rather to the decree of Divine Providence, who has, through the counsel of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, prohibited my visiting you. It is plain her sentiments and mine do not assimilate—perhaps, my regard for her is of too refined a nature, too sublimated in the cause of religion and virtue, to expect a reciprocity or coincidence of opinions, and through that, we are each doomed to be the bane and curse of the other;—myself, in endeavouring to reform licentiousness, and herself, in persisting in it.

“Let youths and maidens take warning by me and the fair lady of this enchanting bower; for we are the true representatives of the pangs of unhallowed love, or of love improperly placed upon

improper objects. Each is jealous of the other; the one from a dereliction of principle, and the other from too much zeal in the cause of honour and propriety of conduct. The passion of infatuating love rushes headlong upon its own destruction. It is as transient as the sunbeams through a watery element—reflecting light, and then passing away, not to be recalled, when neither mind, sentiment, opinion, nor characters correspond. What are the consequences, but the wreck of two minds, neither many degrees removed from the other in sanity, and wise resolutions, which should be the guides and regulators of human actions. I must now fly from hence to the wilderness that surrounds this habitation, and there pour forth my sorrows as a banished man, and meditate on the past with a melancholy sadness. Oh ! that I could believe her to be still my mistress, and loving none else than me !

“ I now leave these scenes of Arcadian, Paradi-
sical, entrancing deceptions, once familiar to my
sight. None ever mourned their mistress as I
have done, for none can be more convinced than I
am, that she has this day given the strongest
proof of her insanity ; for what woman would thus

rush headlong upon destruction, and disregard the counsel of friendship, with the disposition and will to save her. My hand has been extended even in the last hour, when any good could have resulted, but she has treated it with scorn, and subjected me to contempt and ridicule ; for I now plainly perceive her repentance is a farce, and she is still the same woman she always was, and whom the Reverend Dr. Allworthy dreaded so much, lest himself should become entangled within the meshes of her net, and the whole of his flock tainted with the vice of her corrupting influence."

It was in this way that Ardent mentally conversed with himself, as he exclaimed " Farewell, farewell, to that mansion, that had proved his garden of Eden—the fair inhabitant, his lovely Eve, or rather Hebe. But why tarry my tardy feet?" he said ; " it is like tearing from its roots the sturdy oak of the forest, when uprooted from its foundations by blasts from the tempest. By repeated heaving to and fro, is the monarch of the forest moved. It is the same by me,—I still linger on that spot, that has witnessed my former

happiness, but which will never again in this world be repeated."

"At length," he exclaimed, with an effort of mind worthy of a better cause, "I must depart ; I must leave this infatuating palace of unsubstantial bliss, and walk quietly to my own house, to meditate in silence upon the past, as well as upon the present and the future consequences of this indiscretion, ere she returns, who I find, now it is too late, is practising treachery against my peace. Farewell, house, and all that ye contain ; I once loved your mistress, and can scarcely now refrain, for love so unrestrained as ours will never return again."

Having uttered this negative epithalamium, he bid a last adieu to what he once considered the mansion of the blessed, but now the mansion of an infatuating quean, who delighted in overwhelming with shame the former votaries of her love.

CHAPTER XIX.

To talk of love to those experienced, is to teach Cupid himself to bend the bow and shoot the arrows. But such is not the author's design: his object is to direct their flames to more worthy objects, than to those ladies who have not a heart to give, but such as are pierced in a hundred holes, like a kitchen-wench's colander, and those acquainted with the sex can assert, are like the boxes of Pandora, full of physical ills to the mind, person, or pocket, for they are sure to affect one, and it is well if they affect not all; they are with difficulty resisted, but when they are, happy is the man that flies them, to rivet his affectionate attentions upon some more worthy person. Mistress-keeping is a senseless system, and so liable to be abused, never certain of their conduct, and no delicacy in the attachment, for the woman once subdued is always subdued, and no restraint can control her; for she is the lover of garbage that Shakespeare speaks of, and her

lovers are unlimited, till disease or death restrain her.

How far Lord Chesterfield's axiom of falling in love with every woman is a safeguard against any one impression, I cannot determine ; neither would I wish to prostitute my principles to such abandoned conduct. Some affect to make love a toy, the trinket of the hour, but it is too seductive to be trusted under the semblance of playful and harmless amusement, for under the foliage of the rose lieth hid the poisoned snake. Platonic love is only the counterfeit used by a treacherous person, who has a design to ensnare the more securely.

Female friendship is generally the same, but when it leads to marriage, the only safeguard to a man of honour. A virtuous woman is never secure in the principles of a libertine, any more than an honourable man is in the society of a mistress, whether of his own or another's keeping.

The unfortunate woman of low life and low manners is often less injurious to society, than one of a more cultivated mind. Concubinage can never be considered honourable in any age or country, without predicting the fall of that state,

kingdom, or commonwealth, or those who give it countenance and protection ; this is an unpleasant truth to some, but it is not less true on that account. Individuals sink first under its influence—which is always destructive to private worth, and at last the government falls a victim to its demoralizing effects.

There is nothing can cement the society of civilization together, but the bands of mutual affection, founded on mutual esteem and reciprocal interests on both sides, for where one link in the chain is wanting, and that such an important one as marriage, farewell to the greatness of the individual : he had need have a mind as solid as a rock, and the firmness of Windsor Castle, to withstand the seductive influence of the softer sex, when perversely disposed, as they frequently are.

These are the reflections of well-earned experience, in the mazes of that infatuating love—so inconsiderately entered into from choice by many, but which should be guarded against, as much as possible, as it is the wreck of millions of both sexes, and the loss of kingdoms, when the minds of the people, including the lower classes of so-

ciety, become corrupt, by the pernicious examples set them by their superiors.

These truths are too obvious to be agreeable, but they are nevertheless true : twenty years of observation and study have confirmed them as facts in the mind of the author. The duration of kingdoms may be predicted from the practice of moral causes or the want of them, with as much certainty as eclipses in the moon from astronomical computations ; witness continental Europe, as examples, that public opinion governs kings, and subdues them if immoral.

CHAPTER XX.

WE will now return to our friend Ardent, who, it is presumed, has been a source of some amusement to the reader, in his endeavour to establish a Quixotic reasoning in some of the heads of the parish in which he resided; and we shall soon have to record how he gets his head broken for his pains, or, what is fully equivalent to a sensitive being like himself, treated with every indignity and contumely that the English ecclesiastical law, in our partially happy country, could inflict.

“ I think I did right,” said Ardent, on his return, “ to leave her house; some unpleasantness might have ensued, had I continued; and having done but small harm, little inconvenience can be expected as the consequence, more than to send the glazier to mend the pane of glass in the morning. That the lady is mad, or nearly so, I am certain; and if I had included my own act in such opinion, I should not have far exceeded the truth, for it is the act of a madman to break into any

person's house. There is some design in her behaviour, and this is the result of a preconcerted scheme I have little doubt, for the purpose of entangling me the more securely, that I may become her easy victim for the sacrificing me to her revenge. What a state of infatuation must I have been in not to be guided by the forewarning of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, who seems to know her as if it were by intuition, or as if she had been revealed to him by the Almighty. She certainly could not have suspected her modesty to be in danger from me, and fly as from a ravisher. The previous conversation we held ought to have removed such apprehension; in fact, she is too ill to become the toy or instrument of any man's amusement, more than by her conversation; for, indeed, she stands in need of counsel more than any individual I am acquainted with, except myself. It is now that the counsel of the Reverend Dr. Allworthy makes treble—nay, tenfold impression to what it did when first communicated by that worthy man. This axiom now occurs to my recollection,—‘the wise man follows counsel, the fool does not,’ but his own headstrong passions; their wills are their regulators, by which they steer their conduct, until

they are involved in a vortex leading to ruin. But another axiom also says, 'It is never too late to improve.' Proverbs are of use, as they are easily retained upon the mind when the sentence or speech they are extracted from are forgot:—it is the small coin of every-day use, while sentences and speeches are the larger notes retained in closets and private places of concealment, until produced in a mass or singly for the public benefit—as when an author publishes his works, the result, perhaps, of many years' previous labour and application. Dr. Allworthy predicted that my infatuation was of such a nature that every thing might be apprehended from its zeal in her cause, such as every species of extravagancy, and, in fact, was she necessitous, in every vice also: such was the opinion of my worthy friend, and it appears I have profited little by his admonitory counsel, prayers, and forebodings. This is but a simple brawl, after all, and what she can make of it I cannot think; indeed, I am bewildered in conjecture. She can only say I broke the window after some preliminary argumentation; her anger, as a rational woman, certainly cannot extend further, and, therefore, I need not afflict myself unneces-

sarily. But if she is vindictive, of which I fear there is some probability, she may inconvenience me confoundedly, and the consequences may be considerable, from false lights, appearances, and embellishments, thrown on the subject. There appear to be two parties in the parish, the ministerialists and the anti-ministerialists, or oppositionists. Of course her opposition friends will be for rigid measures, and congregate around her, proud of an opportunity of presenting her with their advice and pernicious counsel, telling her infatuation and fanaticism are nearly allied ; therefore, make up for the injury you have received from both by overwhelming the one you have in your power with shame and disgrace. They will further remark, the Reverend Dr. Allworthy only acted as might have been expected from him in his ministerial capacity, but as for that braying Balaam-like ass, show him no mercy,—let him feel the consequence of prating and giving counsel whether wanted or not. But then, if the worst construction is placed upon the transaction that it is capable of receiving, it can be only said he is not as yet cured of his wish to oblige her, and only proves his folly by again attempting to

become her friend. Am I never to be wise? is experience or experimental wisdom so long in attaining, and withal so costly to the possessors, and shall I attempt to reclaim the irreclaimable? The whole weight and authority of the Bible is against me; the Reverend Dr. Allworthy should have been authority sufficient without hazarding a further experiment in practical morality. Am I always to be the sport of fortune, the football of the vicious, and become the tennis-ball of the courts of law? but, perhaps, in a prudential point of view, I am deservedly punished. Have I not thrown myself unnecessarily into danger with too much zeal, and, by so doing, confirmed her supposed or imaginary wrongs in the eyes of other people? I have no doubt her aim is the establishment of her own character by the ruin of mine: what a Quixote-like errand, to endeavour to save the woman who will not be saved! This master-stroke of her politics, this *finesse* of Machiavelian principles, is consummated, at last, by my own act, my own indiscretion, and my own folly; where all this tends or leads to I am at present unconscious, but, perhaps, to the still further elucidation of the human character. Can it be pos-

sible that a Quixote is as requisite in morals as has already been exemplified to the world in the character of Don Quixote, in the science of honour and the exposition of chivalry. Religion also has had its champion in Geoffrey Wildgoose, who has faithfully elicited the fanatic principles of religious enthusiasm. If such is the task I have to perform, that of vindicating morals by elucidation and example, I ought not to flinch, any more than John Bunyan did, when he wrote the progressive trials of a true Christian, in that admirable performance called the Pilgrim's Progress. If this is admitted, I can only be considered as the child of chance and the instrument of destiny, to control licentiousness of principles, and, perchance, assist to stem the torrent when about to desolate this mighty kingdom with its wrath, 'For thus far,' the Lord of Hosts may have said, 'thou shalt come, but no farther;' restraining the vices of licentiousness within certain bounds, that it shall not walk barefaced through this land, neither sit in high places, nor perform the offices and duties of religion."

Such reasoning as this appeared to be communicated to our friend, Ardent, by Divine inspiration

and authority to persevere, and still further attempt to reclaim this profligate woman ; that he should ultimately prevail, or that her fall and overthrow should be great in its consequences.

Ardent had argued himself into a state of mind bordering on tranquillity, when he was roused from his reverie by a loud knocking at his door and repeated ringings at his house bell :—

“ The very devil is in both the knocker and the bell-clapper,” thought Ardent, “ or rather in the hand that thus serenades me at this late hour, now ten o’clock, and as I was about preparing to retire for the night. Perhaps it is an ill omen,” thought Ardent, “ far worse to me than the raven’s croak by day or the owl’s screams by night ; and this, too, before I have tranquillized my disordered brain.” Ardent then began to mutter, “ If this is the effects of love,”—but he had not time to finish the sentence when another and another thundering peal of knocking and ringing resounded through the house. “ I am coming,” exclaimed Ardent, as they again and again roused him from his meditations and evening visions on the decrees of Divine Providence to this his favourite land of morals and virtues.

Ardent opened the door leading into the street, and there beholding the constable of the village, he exclaimed, "What, so soon, my friend? is my enormity of offence so great that you could not wait until the morning light?"

"I am come, sir," said the village Dogberry, "by the authority of a lady who you know very well, to learn what you meant by breaking into her house: at first, she thought it was a sailor man, and came running over to my house, saying, that a robbery or murder, she was sure, was intended to be committed, and requested my immediate assistance to apprehend the person. We were talking over the matter when you came out of the front door of her house, and walked quietly down the street. I then said, 'Surely, ma'am, you could not mean Mr. Ardent?' She said, 'No, it was a sailor man by his clothes.' I told her I thought she must be under a mistake, but she still persisted that it could not have been you, but a sailor man; or, if it was you, she wishes you now to declare it, and to know what you could mean by such conduct."

"Well, then, I am the man, Mr. Constable, and the lady need seek no further to criminate any other individual, for I only am the person

who has been guilty of this great piece of indiscretion. The truth of the story is, myself and the lady walked from church together; I left her at the extremity of the village, promising to call and take my tea with her,—she said, to-morrow evening; I thought it was said with good-nature, and therefore presumed that this evening would be equally as well, and suit me better. On my arriving at her house, through the back premises, as I used frequently to do before, she stood behind the glass-door, amusing me with playful speeches, until, being provoked by her coyness, or what other term you may call it, I—in a very uncavalier manner, I admit—took up a pebble from the gravel walk, showed it to her, and, upon her again saying to-morrow evening, I broke the pane of glass and let myself into the house by removing the middle bolt. This is the sum total of my delinquency, unless, indeed, I stopped in the house some time, to take my last leave of it and all it contained.”

“The lady is now waiting for your answer,* and insists upon your immediate reply.”

* It was not known to Ardent, at the time, that the lady was on the outside of his house; had he been informed, as he ought to have been, it would probably have prevented all the after ill consequences to both.

“Be pleased to say that I am in great perplexity, that I know not what reply to make; but should I advise with any individual, it will be the Reverend Mr. Aimwell.”

“Is this all you have to say, Mr. Ardent?”

“It is, unless you may further mention that I am sorry she misunderstood my motives and wish to oblige her by an attempt to re-establish her health, and, as I had fondly expected, her tranquillity of mind at the same time.”

“Shall I inform Mrs. Freelove of your intention to advise with the Reverend Mr. Aimwell?”

“Oh, certainly, by all means.” So saying, the constable went his way.

CHAPTER XXII.

To the blunder of the village constable, or, perhaps, to fate, or the chances and accidents of life, may be attributed the writing of these volumes ; for upon that critical moment depended the fortunes of our hero and of the lady to whom he had been so much attached. It was but a trifling circumstance that prevented the great Duke of Marlborough overwhelming Louis the Fourteenth of France. It was in this instance but a trifling want of communication that ruined not only the lady of this history but her unfortunate son. Ardent, not being informed by the constable of the presence of her, who was standing outside of his house, shivering in the night air, prevented his showing her that gallantry and marked attention which would doubtless have soothed her angry feelings, and a slight apology would have been all that was required to save appearances, and particularly with the new clergyman, the Reverend Mr. Aimwell, who by

no means wished to promote the angry feelings of his parishioners ; and to this temporary omission of information, which would have enabled Ardent to form a judgment of what should have been done at that critical moment, is to be attributed all the calamities that happened to the parties. The lady, learning the intention of Ardent from the constable, of consulting with the Reverend Mr. Aimwell, was precipitate enough to take the lead, and began her communication first, without waiting to see if Ardent would or would not, who, next morning, in the moments of cool reflection, thought it premature to say anything further about the affair ; in the hope it would blow over as a love quarrel, not to be regarded any more in general than the crying of froward children. Not so did the lady decide,—her fears and apprehensions precipitated her ruin : she went round, in her chaise, to all the principal families of the village, denouncing Ardent as a housebreaker, and declaring her resolution to punish him with the utmost rigour of the law—showing malignancy of temper, which was not encouraged, but which her own headstrong principles and want of good sense urged her to ; aided and assisted, as she was, by ill

advisers, and those counsellors of her's who dreaded Ardent's influence over her a second time, which they thought would have tended to their exclusion from her house; for there is an old saying, which was fully exemplified upon this fall-out, or, indeed, from the first grand fall-out between herself and our hero—

“ That in the absence of company,
Is welcomed trumpery.”

And in this remarkable history was fully illustrated that principle of human mind so ably depicted by our great dramatic writer, the immortal Shakspeare :—

“ She descended from the rosy bed,
To feed on garbage.”

But we must not anticipate events by a precipitancy of narration. A village war was excited of opinion against opinion, when a little explanation on both sides might have allayed the angry feelings at the commencement, but which nothing short of the final ruin of the heroine could afterwards effect, so determined was she upon overwhelming her lover, who, by the by, had betrayed her secret, but by so doing had prevented others from falling through her arts.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WE shall shortly have to introduce to our reader a new character, that of the Reverend Mr. Aimwell, a worthy, considerate, and kind gentleman. It will be recollected that our hero hesitated upon the propriety of making any further stir in the pantomime or Tom-fool's part of the play in which he had of late become a perfect Proteus ; assuming a variety of forms and appearances, sometimes as the friend of the lady, at other times against her, to the no small amusement, it is presumed, of the laughter-loving votaries of pleasure ; for Comus, the god of merry-making, held his court in this village, as well as in most other places : neither could the villagers of this romantic forest form an idea which most predominated, whether there was most seriousness in the affair or most of the ridiculous, so near did they bear a resemblance—convulsing one part of the little world with laughter, and affecting others again with seriousness as to the

probability of the after-consequences. For the grave and considerate, although, perhaps, not able to suppress a smile, would not be seen to jest upon so serious a subject as that which was in itself no jesting matter, as the effects soon evinced to more than one individual in the vicinity,—in fact, to both of the acting parties; although the village had always been celebrated for its concerts of drums and tin kettles, called rough music, upon any delinquency or slight moral turpitude of their offending neighbours against the peace of society or invading the privileges of each other, either of moral chastity or any other known rule of right, that has been admitted for ages past and confirmed by religion and moral precepts, at least twice on a Sunday, in the parish church of the village, which was situated one mile and a half from the scene of action; so that the lady's mansion may have been considered at one extremity of the parish and the church at the other, or, as the Reverend Dr. Allworthy would have said, the Deity presided at one end of the parish, and the evil one at the other. Indeed, ever and anon there was the devil to pay, or who in the wrong was impossible

to be determined: the listeners, on both sides, heard both stories. It is true, Ardent had ventured over the threshold of forbidden ground, and the devil, or the lady's agent, in the form of Lawyer Rapine, was about to make him smart for his folly.

No sooner was our hero apprised that the lady had gone the circuit of the parish, endeavouring to prejudice him in the minds of all sensible people, than he thought it prudent to advise with the Reverend Mr. Aimwell, who had become the friend and patron of our hero, in the same manner as the Reverend Dr. Allworthy before. Ardent was moving forward from his extremity of the parish, to converse with the Reverend Mr. Aimwell upon the rumours in circulation, when the reverend gentleman left his own house for precisely the same purpose, that of conversing with our hero upon the same subject and the general reports of the village, particularly that of the communication of our worthy pious lady so often mentioned, to the reverend clergyman himself. Accordingly, they met, as might very naturally be expected, about half way from each other's house, each having taken, not the nearest way

over the field, but round the road, and, of consequence, met, as it should seem they did, near the turnpike-gate. The conversation began by the Reverend Mr. Aimwell, who said, "I was going to your house, Mr. Ardent." Ardent bowed, and replied, "I was going to yours, reverend sir."

"I have had a strange complaint laid against you," said the reverend gentleman, smiling: "you can judge from what quarter the communication reached me, of breaking into a lady's house; I hope your design was not of a nature past forgiveness?"

"I plead guilty, Mr. Aimwell, to the indiscretion of having conversed with the lady you allude to, when I apprised her of my intention of calling upon her, as she complained of despondency, not having recovered her spirits since she was deprived of the patronage of the Sunday School; and, as she appeared sinking under it, I offered her that soothing consolation within my ability, to rouse her, if possible, from the sinking state in which dissolution seemed to be fast approaching upon her. It is true, she said to-morrow evening, but, conceiving the intention to be the same, I

persisted in arguing the punctilio with her of this evening, and during the argumentation, and before the debate was well ended, one being on one side of the glass-door and the other on the other, a pebble stone from the gravel walk ended the difference in dispute, and, as I had fancied, like an intermediate intercessor or negotiator, curtailed the reasoning on both sides ; as a skilful third power, in the balance of states in modern Europe, usually settles the difference. But this was not easily brought about in the present instance. Some sinister view, I apprehend, was the cause of all the bickering and all the *finesse*, for had it been positively her intention to have excluded me from the house, why not have locked the door, or bolted the top and bottom bolt instead of the middle one ? for I evidently found, by pushing the door, the nature of the obstacle and only impediment ; therefore, concluded she was one of those sort of coy ladies that will be forced to a compliance of that request which they of themselves are but too ready in general to grant—an interview with their pretty persons, or at the least, the favour of a *tête-a-tête*, as had been previously agreed upon an hour before, with this

difference only, that I was to call on the following evening. Now, whether it was intended as a trick, or as a further specimen of the art magic by which she attracts, allures, and destroys the opposite sex, I am incompetent to judge, or if calling upon her the following evening would have been unattended with insult or manœuvre is uncertain; but this I learn, her fears, or pretended fears, exceeded, beyond all due bounds of proportion, her real danger, either from assault, battery, or any other violence she may have fancied herself exposed to. And as to her saying a sailor man broke into her house, with the violent accusations following such assertion, they may be attributed to one of two causes—either that she is insane, and knows not what she says or does, or that her resentment against me exceeds all rational conduct, not to be reasoned upon as ordinary occurrences and events. In either case she is to be pitied for her zeal in a bad cause, so far outraging, as it does, the bounds of truth and probability. Now, whether my own zeal to save this unfortunate lady proceeded from humanity, or from some real regard for her still remaining, which may be termed, if you please, infatuation,

in either sense it was not an unamiable principle, inasmuch as I risked my own overthrow with the view to benefit and make her, if possible, again respectable in society, which was scarcely deserving of such severity of comment, fear, fright, and all the artifice assumed to work upon public feeling and excite commiseration for an unprotected female, as she styles herself. I certainly had doubted if the Reverend Dr. Allworthy's opinion of this lady was quite correct, and even now think she is in some degree to be pitied, from imbecility of mind, easily excited by others to endanger her own safety in public estimation. To do the Reverend Dr. Allworthy justice, he has not publicly denounced her, and there was still hope, as I had imagined, to expect a reform in her principles and habits of life, particularly as she is evidently in a declining state of health."

"I am very glad, Mr. Ardent, the lady called upon me first to make her complaint: I have heard her story, and she criminales you largely, and threatens still more. My advice, which I hope will not be lost upon you, is, upon no occasion whatever attempt to speak to her again. She asserts she is an innocent and calumniated wo-

man, that you have nearly ruined her in body and mind ; and, what appears clear to me, she is striving to retrieve her own character at the expense of yours."

"I am obliged to you, reverend sir, for the mildness of your reproof and the gentlemanly manner you have chosen to expostulate with me. She has nothing to apprehend from me,—I wish I could equally say she is as safe from her own machinations."

"I learn, Mr. Ardent, that she has been to all the principal houses in the parish, endeavouring to make good her representation ; therefore, be very circumspect, as her intention towards you is not of the most favourable nature." With this caution the reverend gentleman went his way.

The reflection of Ardent, upon the Reverend Mr. Aimwell leaving him, was, that he was a very good, kind, and considerate gentleman, a feeling and worthy minister of peace and religion, likewise a family man, and every way worthy of the confidence of his parishioners, who placed reliance upon his good sense and just notions of propriety in the duties of his parochial functions.

CHAPTER XXIV.

As the incidents thicken in the progress of this history, or as it advances with rapidity to its final close, it will be necessary to introduce several personages to the reader, and their usual conferences will be pursued. And for this purpose we have now to announce to the reader's notice a no less considerable personage than Lawyer Rapine, a village attorney, residing some few miles off in an adjoining village, in a remote and still more interior part of the forest, surrounded by savage wilds; partaking more of the ferocity and seclusion of his character than of any other similitude or resemblance he could ever be associated with in the mind of Ardent, and may fairly be considered as a species of wild boar, no ways peculiar to this region, but overrunning the country from sea to sea,—that is, from the Land's-End in Cornwall, to John O'Groat's, in the land of cakes. With the propensities of the tusky boar

he combined all the artifice of the fox with the rapacity of the wolf; having a strong predilection to make sheep and lambs his prey who he found straggling upon the heath, without a shepherd or his dog to protect them from the ravenous fangs of this rapacious monster. A less description might have sufficed, but, to do justice to the individual, too much cannot be said in his dispraise in wanting the milk of human kindness usually belonging to some few of his species. Be this as it may, it is but an extempore effusion upon his endowments. The interior of the man we refuse to pollute our pages with describing; for, as I have before said, it is not the intention of this history to depict the blackest of the black, but only those colours emanating or reflected from the principal characters or those connected with them, not for the purpose of their individual exhibition, but to portray the Machiavelian principles of the heroine, aided, as she was now about to be, by a second Machiavel, a *fac-simile* as if he had again risen from the dead to animate the living body of another Cæsar Borgia, nephew or son to a Pope of Rome, if not a pope himself; or, at all events,

without going further, to animate the dark and demoniacal character of Lawyer Rapine ; for who but he could have counselled a poor woman to her destruction, and afterwards sold off her property to transfer it within his own coffers ? If ever demon inhabited human shape, Lawyer Rapine was that man. . Lest the reader should think his Satanic majesty calumniated by the comparison, it will be but justice to permit Lawyer Rapine to speak for himself:—far be it from the wish of the Author to tarnish any man's reputation, but who can wash the black-a-moor white, or give the colouring of an angel to those actions, darker than the darkest night ? A sooty sweep may be remarkable for conjugal virtue—such was not Lawyer Rapine. A sweep may have the honour not to divest his wife of her fortune, and then desert her for the arms of another, and her again for a third ; this would be too bad for any black man, and prove the heart blacker than the surface, for the one may be only skin deep, while the other remains indelible, and never to be washed out. Let the Devil have his due, and it is some sort of negative

praise to affirm that there was not one Machiavel alone in this history, but a pair, and, if this is doubted, be attentive to the reading of subsequent chapters, for the present is only worthy of being considered as the *avant courier*.

CHAPTER XXV.

To yield the lady common justice, who has the honour of sustaining one of the principal characters in this history, it will be recollected that her antipathy to our hero had been excessive ever since he had placed a restraint on her freaks of seducing thoughtless and inconsiderate young men like himself. Infatuation is one of the most dangerous of all passions that such ladies of agreeable manners and pleasing prepossessions have to apprehend, for where there is infatuation there is virtue, or a fixed affection or attachment to one object, which is seldom or never excited but from seeming virtue in the mistress, assumed by her for the purpose of attracting and rivetting the affections of the youth more securely. Levity of principle also proceeds from the male sex, for there are coquets in each sex, and both are equally bad in principle as in practice, and both tending to the ruin of their unfortunate victims as well as themselves. Now, if it so happens

that the lady is the libertine seducer and meets with a man of principle, as young Ardent was in this history, and has taken unusual pains to preserve her secret inviolable, until she has either dispossessed him of his principles or lulled them into a soft repose, by a seeming compliance with every principle of honour and integrity that can adorn the female character, he then becomes her slave and idolizes her as a divinity ; and, if some few apparent contradictions exist, which his own penetration cannot solve by reason of his infirmity, that is, his being as blind as love and infatuation can make him, and he afterwards finds out that there is a dereliction of principle, from his known rule of right and the established usages of society, he then, as he cannot divest himself of her society, as she is intermixed with all his associations both real and imaginary, attempts to reclaim her ; and the lady, finding herself under restraint in regard to others, very naturally contrives means to destroy her former lover, or, at all events, to take such means to sicken him in the pursuit as to destroy herself at the precise period that she has weaned her lover from his infatuated preconception of her being an amiable

woman, or having at least some good traits of character to make her estimable in his eyes—although it was palpably notorious to every other individual of her being remarkable for the contrary, and so overbalanced by the opposite vices as to make the angelic woman, in her lover's eyes, the very opposite in those of all other sensible people.

This chapter has partaken, as usual, too much of the spirit of digression, and it is therefore preferred to begin the Machiavelian dialogue in another, expressly devoted to the sublime principles that are to be elucidated by two refined and professed artists in that way.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE heroine having vented part of her resentment against our hero, by placing the worst construction possible upon what he thought was playful conduct, in the true spirit of an angry woman, now commenced that legal process against him so frequently abused in this country, proving the occasional perversion of our laws as well as injury done to the people who live under them. Having gone round the village, or rather round the parish, she thought it proper to consult with an attorney, not the most eminent she could find, but one who she thought would confine his demand of a remuneration to an admiration of and devotion to her own pretty person and accomplishments. Her reasoning was of this description:—"If I let this opportunity slip, he will never give me such another; by degrading him, I shall drive him from the place, and establish my own character at the same time. If I can but remove this Argus, Ardent, with his hundred eyes,

I can have as many lovers as I please. I love the admiration and attentions of young men ; I take care to bewilder their judgment first, and then they are at my mercy. But my attractions have lately sustained a severe shock, by being no longer patroness of the Sunday School, which established my character for sanctity, piety, true holiness, and purity of life ; it was a sort of guarantee for my conduct in the opinion of the world, and made my favours be thought of inestimable value, from the rarity of the circumstance, that a woman of character should condescend so to bless those whom she favoured with her acquaintance. Its removal has been almost a death-blow to my pleasures. I have sent for Lawyer Rapine, and he has returned for answer, he will be with me directly. I hope he will not be long before he comes. O, there he is," said the lady, on hearing a loud knocking at the hall-door, " and I will let him in ;" so saying, away she tripped, and returned with the limb of the law.

" Good morning, madam," said this amiable being ; " I am extremely sorry that anything unpleasant should have occurred in your neighbourhood, and, as I have heard, even in your house."

“ Ah! Mr. Rapine, I expected—I did not know what; possibly, to be murdered.”

“ So your servant informed me. I hope you mean to punish the aggressor, and teach him better manners than to attack an unprotected single lady in her own house, again. Do you mean to swear, madam, you were in bodily fear, with the expectation of a rape being committed on your pretty person?”

“ I will be advised by you, Lawyer Rapine.”

“ Then, first of all, swear you were in bodily fear.”

“ That I will, before any magistrate.”

“ That is right, madam; he will then be obliged to find sureties to keep the peace, or go to the county goal until next quarter-sessions.”

“ The very thing I want to bring about is to place him in durance vile.”

“ Ay, and then bring your action for assault and battery, and claim considerable damages, so as to ruin him that way; and, if that does not finish him, we will provoke him so by litigation, as to call you a bad name, before me. I am your witness, and we will then place him in the Ecclesiastical Court: there are some old musty

Papistical statutes still unrepealed. We will place him within the trammels of the church, and let him fight his way out if he can. He must then either degrade himself or be outlawed, or ruined by expenses I can involve him in. A more certain victim you could not wish for, and entirely at your's and my mercy, and we two together will finish him; for, luckily for you, the edicts of barbarous ages are not yet repealed in our courts of law, and more especially in the Ecclesiastical Court. Breaking into your house, by smashing a pane of glass, is a capital offence, most likely punishable by transportation for life, across the herring-pond; and this, I think, is as sure as that his name is Ardent. Ardent, indeed, ha, ha, ha! I cannot help laughing—you will excuse me, madam. Ha, ha, ha! By what fatal mischance could you have become acquainted with a name so pregnant with adventure; had his name been Marplot, or Makeplot, it would have been applicable to the system he has pursued."

"You have made me very happy, Mr. Rapine, in the abundant resources you have against this young man. Injure him all you can, for he has injured me: he has calumniated my character, and

I am resolved to sacrifice him to my revenge. Barnwell was hanged, and I see no reason why Ardent should not be hanged also, if it is possible to be brought about by any means you can think of."

Mr. Rapine, with a velocity of thought, now ran over all the advantages of the prosecution to himself. It was a silent and reflective cogitation of his mental faculties condensed into this form: "I married a woman with seven hundred a year; I divorced myself from her, or rather stole away, leaving her nearly pennyless. I now keep a mistress, for it is all the fashion, and here is a fine chance for me; a pretty woman for my client, and a fortune to be made out of herself and her former lover. I'll take the long odds she and I are better acquainted before we part, for folly and obstinacy were always the best friends to the lawyers, and here is a pretty woman to crown the whole. What a fool Ardent was to fall out with her; luscious food put into his mouth, and he would not eat it,—and all for conscience sake. Oh, what a fool! Why, I would risk all that might happen in this world and the next for such a chance. One of the finest

women in the universe, and fall out with her, and not love her when she was willing to be loved!"

"Pray, what are you thinking about, Mr. Rapine?" said the lady, interrupting the virtuous cogitations of the honest lawyer.

"I was thinking what a fool Ardent was to fall out with you; if you can swear he actually committed a rape, you can hang him out of the way at once, and that, you know, will save much trouble and expense."

"I did not stop to try what he would do; and he may have robbed my house, for anything I know to the contrary. I at first thought he had been a sailor man; but he has confessed to the constable that it was himself that broke the pane of glass."

"He has, has he? You are, then, certain of convicting him upon his own evidence or confession."

"My neighbour, the constable, saw him leave the house by the hall-door, and walk away, seemingly as unconcerned as if nothing unusual had occurred."

"He did, did he? I will place that down in my memorandum-book. A case must be made

out, to be laid first before a magistrate, then before the grand jury; your being a pretty woman will to a certainty secure a verdict in your favour, for judge, jury, and all sympathize with a pretty woman, and to defend them to the utmost is their delight; even the legislature sanctions pretty women, and have retained an obsolete law, called the law of pains and penalties, for their preservation. The first step, madam, will be to obtain possession of Ardent's person."

"Then it will be better to take him, Mr. Rapine, before he is out of bed in a morning, or he may not be found."

"Never fear, madam,—I will prepare a warrant for his apprehension, and send a brace of constables to apprehend him. Have a postchaise in readiness, or rather let him procure one, and take him to the first large town, away from his friends; you then commit him to the county gaol for want of securities. The Reverend Mr. Key will make out his mittimus, and consign him over to the county gaol, and there we will, if you please, leave him."

"Excellent sport indeed, Mr. Rapine; I wonder how he will like it; how I shall enjoy the

agony of his feelings. I'll give him enough of tender feelings; he does not know me thoroughly yet, but he shall before I have done with him."

"Had he made his attack, Mrs. Freelove, in a courteous manner, it would have been quite a different thing; then, if the pane of glass became broken in playing or toying with each other, one on one side of the door, and the other on the other, in amorous contentions, it would have been merely a job for the glazier, without further unpleasantness in the result. But this is quite another affair. Assault a lady in her own house! He is a bad tactician as well as politician, and ought to have known that you have a right to defend your castle, for every person's house is his or her castle;—so says the law of the land. It would have been worthy of the first tactician of the age to have laid siege to a pretty woman, bombarded her fortress, and carried her off by a *coup-de-main*, willing or unwilling; but what would have been nothing out of the way for a knight of the pistol, is quite another thing to be accomplished by a knight of the pestle. It cannot be heard of with common patience."

"Lose no time in procuring a warrant, Lawyer Rapine."

“ Depend upon it, madam, you shall have it this night; and you may then commence in your turn a battery upon his romantic notions, as soon as it is light. We will teach him how he sets about reforming a lady of character again.”

“ It shall be done, Mr. Rapine; he began, but I will finish.”

“ Good by, madam; depend upon my best efforts in your cause,” said this lover of mischief, at the same time shaking hands with her, and, chuckling with malicious satisfaction, he left the house.

“ Now, then,” said the lady, after his departure, “ I have my Romeo of a lover tight enough within the iron grasp of the law, and he must be a slippery eel indeed to escape its fangs; besides, I shall have law cheap, for, in despite of Ardent’s jealousy, I have a way to settle the law expenses. I will teach him to remember a widow again; I will teach him to slight my favours. Ardent, Ardent, you have ruined me! I love you and hate you by turns; had you been less jealous, all would have been well.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE afternoon after the dismissal of Lawyer Rapine, arrived the uncle of the lady at the lodge, with the same privacy as heretofore, no one knowing, but the lady herself, who he was, or from whence he came. He was evidently a man of fortune, but why the concealment? why the mystery?—Had he been Jupiter descended from the clouds, he could not have excited more astonishment, and he came at that critical era when her fortunes depended upon the balance, or rather like the gambler throwing the dice-box for perhaps the last time, having staked his all.

“You seem unhappy of late,” said the uncle, “how is this? has anything fresh occurred?—you are ever getting into some unpleasantness or other.”

The lady then burst into tears, saying “I have been ill-used, and I will never endure it.”

“Endure what?” inquired the incognito.

“Why,” sobbed the lady, “Ardent has been

telling the Reverend Dr. Allworthy a parcel of lies of me, and the reverend clergyman has deprived me of the patronage of the Sunday school, and I am sure it is very unjust, for I used frequently to hear the young girls their lessons, and those that were most perfect I gave rewards to, with other inducements to promote emulation among them, that I might commend them, and reward them the next time I came."

"Well, niece, and how did the Reverend Dr. Allworthy like your giving money?"

"He objected, by saying it was improper, and I then left off."

"Be patient, and grieve not at ills you cannot prevent," said the grave senator. I hear the reverend divine has left the village, to give place to the rector—How do you like him?"

"Pretty well at present,—he is a friend to Ardent, but I will spend my last guinea to ruin Ardent."

"Ridiculous, why should you be so resentful?"

"Because he broke into my house a few days' since, by breaking a pane of glass, saying 'he would come and take his tea with me.' I said in

joke, to-morrow evening, and he would come that evening, and broke the pane of glass."

"And he served you very properly: you had no right to trifle with his feelings, and as you had extended your civility so far, surely you might have conceded the punctilio between you, and have allowed his visit that evening, as well as on the next, for I think there was no more impropriety at one time than another. But equally improper at any time—and I have frequently intimated my dislike of your having so many visitors. I expected no less than there would be something disagreeable sooner or later."

"I will be revenged of him, I am determined."

"Have you given him any fresh encouragement? for it was certainly a great piece of assurance in him to invite himself, after you had forbid him your house, as you tell me you did, and also had ordered the servant to use him roughly. He must be strangely infatuated to persist—I know not his reasons, but, if all you say is correct, and you have not given encouragement by inviting him to your house, he has used you ill; but if you have held out expectations or promises, he has

behaved as might be expected from irritated feelings, and you have brought down upon you his contempt, which is the consequence of not following my advice."

"I will swear the peace against him, and prosecute him for a housebreaker. I have given Lawyer Rapine instructions to proceed against him."

"Lawyer Rapine!—Then you are a lost woman, to all intents and purposes,—out of one difficulty into a greater. You should, at the least, have advised with a respectable attorney: you might then have expected honest counsel and caution, but this man will have your last shilling, if it is possible he can get it from you, through your folly or perverseness. This affair should have been suffered to blow over as an accidental, and not as an intentional offence; then you would have shown your wisdom, but by continuing to prosecute Ardent, he will ruin you, and perhaps himself also."

"Then I shall have my revenge of him."

"Nonsense! you should not think further about it, and then it will soon cease to become the public talk; therefore, proceed no further in this

business. It will, I fear, endanger my name becoming implicated, which I have sufficient reason for wishing to keep concealed."

"I will take care your name shall never be mentioned, but I certainly will punish Ardent, who has trifled with my good-nature, and influenced Dr. Allworthy to take the school away from me."

"I must advise you, madam, to the contrary of that,—by prosecuting Ardent, you secure your own ruin, and I will not be accessory to his ruin, or yours either. By employing Lawyer Rapine, you will become his prey, and all that you have, or I am greatly deceived. He is not thought to be an honourable man, and will think no pains too great to destroy you, under the appearance of law, and nursing your resentment against that young man. I am decidedly against this prosecution. That right may take place at last, should have been left to the will of Divine Providence; and why you should get Lawyer Rapine to hasten your destruction, I cannot conceive. It was very improper conduct on the part of Ardent, but still worse on the part of yourself, not to prohibit his coming in the first instance. I cannot encourage you in vindictiveness, and as you say you will

spend your last guinea to ruin him, what is it but enabling your lawyer to pick your pocket?"

This sort of conference passed between the lady and the uncle, until, very thoughtlessly, she offended her best friend, and he left her, resolved not to visit again a woman lost to all sense of common prudence, or even common honesty ; for her determination was to sacrifice Ardent, for the sustaining or upholding of her own character, conceiving, as imprudent women usually do, they can deceive the public opinion by effrontery and audacity.

The veil must now be drawn over the lady's infirmities, that we may pass on to other matters as concerns the hero of this history, and not devote too much time and attention to a vicious woman, who could not, or would not be convinced, and therefore rushed headlong down the precipice which Lawyer Rapine led her to. The uncle also took his leave of her, resolved never again to visit her.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN the morning after the conferences, as narrated in the two preceding chapters, and as early as it was light, two men rushed into Ardent's bed-chamber, each taking him by the collar of his shirt, saying, as with one voice, " You are my prisoner ;" at the same time tearing his shirt, to show their zeal, when they pronounced the king's name.

IN this way did the village authorities make the capture of our hero ; and, to judge by appearances, a very pretty business he had made of it. First constable exclaiming, " You must go with me." The second constable, equally as much of a barbarian as the first, said the same. Savage manners are practised upon some occasions, more than is generally supposed. Behold the gentle Ardent, the toy of woman, thus dragged from his bed by the myrmidons of the law, and the iron grasp of legal processes that were now commenced against him. To this ungentle usage, widely differing from the favours of

the soft and tender sex, to whose mysteries our hero had been but recently initiated, he made this reply or observation:—

“Gentlemen, this is giving me but short notice. How came you admitted? did you force your way?”

“We both passed your servant, and this is our warrant to apprehend you, in the king’s name, for housebreaking. The warrant expresses you are to be found running up and down the country with those notorious vagabonds, John Doe and Richard Roe; and, therefore, we were ordered by Lawyer Rapine to seize you in bed, before you were stirring.”

“I suppose,” said Ardent, “at the suit of poor Mrs. Freelove. She knows not what she does, I am convinced, and this action of hers confirms it. She is ill-advised, which, together with her own resentments, will be the death of her, notwithstanding all I can do or have done to save her.”

This remark made no impression upon the two men in office, who growled out, “We must take you with us directly.”

“Well, well, give me time to dress, gentle-

men, and tear not my shirt by your violence; for surely that is not also contained in your writ to apprehend me."

The constables here replied, they would let him dress; but, without suffering him to wash, shave, or breakfast, hurried him off in a post-chaise, each of the kind gentlemen taking a seat on either side of him, in the king's name; although, it must be confessed, very unpolished substitutes for his majesty, they traversed the heath together, astonishing the natives as they passed, for who had not heard of the loves and bickerings of these celebrated lovers. It may have been said, in the language of romance, that he was trebly a slave or captive: first, by his own infatuating self-will; secondly, by the lady's charms, prepossessions, and caprices; and, thirdly, by the iron grasp of the law, having one of its myrmidons sitting on each side of him: that had he been Robin of Bagshot, Dick Hounslow, or Tom Gibbet, or even Robin Hood himself, or the Golden Farmer before alluded to, he could not have been treated with more indignity or insulting usage, not proceeding from the choice of the constables themselves, for they were

peaceable men, but from the lady and her henceforth lawyer-lover, or ruffian, Lawyer Rapine. The simple men conceived they were only in the line of duty by obeying their instructions, however disagreeable to their own feelings.

Ardent's being thus kidnapped at early dawn, was not so privately accomplished but many were informed of the transaction, so that they looked astonished, stared, and wondered, all the way Ardent ascended the village slope or ascent, ere he arrived on the wilds of the forest, which they traversed with rapid pace, through scenery of sublime and savage wildness and grandeur, worthy of the most barbaric or early ages of the world, when all was confusion and desolation, as now beheld by our hero and his attendants, the champions of the lady and her lover, now known as the celebrated Lawyer Rapine of this history, who, to make room for himself in the lady's favour, thus kidnapped his rival, and, as he had imagined, consigned him to a place of safety, usually denominated in this country, in its more civilized state, the dungeon of the county gaol. It was an awful exchange to contemplate—from the bosom of the lady of his regard, to be in-

closed by stone walls ; and, instead of looking on the Idalian groves and Paphian bowers in which Venus herself sought delight and consolation, to be confined, like a wild beast or a lion of the desert, in a cage, fabricated by the ingenuity of man, and the very air which he was intended to breathe inhaled through the grating of iron bars.

So did Ardent meditate, or hold conversational intercourse with himself, for his friend on either side of him sat as silent and appeared to be as meditative as himself, or as the Giant Grumbo-Bumbo of former days ; or, what will be equally as well recognised by our readers, the Giants Gog and Magog, of Guildhall, their clubs being converted into constables' staves, and the sheepskins round their loins into woollen indispensables.

Not to detain the reader too long on what is termed the wilderness part of Windsor Forest, we have now to revert to the lady and her manservant, who were gone on before our hero, to exhibit articles of the peace, as instructed by Lawyer Rapine, aided as he was by her own ingenuity. Ardent was advancing rapidly in the lady's rout, from travelling with greater rapidity and on the same line of road as the lady of his

former affections, escorted as he was by two of the king's own officers of state, with their insignia of authority as beadles and constables of the parish.

It was impossible for Ardent to be serious, even amidst all the bustle and angry feelings on both sides; neither could he well believe the lady was really in earnest in this warlike or hostile manner of proceeding; forgetting, perhaps, that he had lost his former influence over her, and that she was now become, to all intents and purposes, a candidate for the successful rivalry of his Satanic Majesty, who had sent his proxy, or ambassador, before him, to claim her as his own, in the character of the never-to-be-forgotten Lawyer Rapine. In this way the parties travelled at early dawn over the wilds of the forest, each following the bent and construction of their own occupations and pursuits;—the lady in seeking her revenge, and the gentleman in endeavouring to prevent it, when relieved from the restraint of his two formidable companions, who sat one on each side of him, with all the gravity befitting the constituted authorities of this realm, or as two Tom cats watching a little mouse.

The subsequent part of this adventure is

worthy of another chapter, and one expressly set apart for the incidents as they occurred; for, as the author wishes to convey instruction to his young readers as well as information, he cannot be said to perform his promise better than by giving a faithful and circumstantial detail of every particular circumstance that occurred before the respectable magistrate before whom he was dragged; not politely informed that it was necessary to follow the tip-staves to the magistrate, but assailed with all the personal indignity necessary in arresting a real housebreaker and midnight robber, and not such a gentle lover and faithful swain as Ardent.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE lady, as by previous appointment with her solicitor, arrived first at the worthy magistrate's, the Reverend Dr. Key. The communication made by the magistrate to Ardent was of the following nature; and it must be confessed he showed our hero every indulgence within his power, as a respectable individual, which was afterwards gratefully remembered by Ardent.

“Mr. Ardent, a lady residing in your village exhibits articles of the peace against you, and you must be prepared with sureties, yourself in one hundred pounds, and your sureties in fifty pounds each.”

“Is there no avoiding it, sir?” asked the unfortunate Ardent.

“The lady and her man-servant are in the next room; if you can persuade her to drop proceedings against you, it will be attended with infinitely less trouble to you in the end. I am no

further interested than in securing peace in the king's name."

"I am greatly obliged to you, sir, for your information, and I will at least make the effort, that I may not reproach myself hereafter with not having made use of the proper means to conciliate her resentment against me."

Ardent then left the room of the magistrate to meet the lady, attended as she was by her manservant.

"I am referred here, madam," said our hero on entering, "by the magistrate, to make some peace-offerings to your resentment, as the least inconvenience to both of us. If you consider yourself in fear, it is quite unnecessary; and I give you my most solemn word and honour that you are perfectly safe from any violence from me: on the contrary, you excite my pity, my compassion, and commiseration, to see you as you are, a beautiful woman, thus destroying yourself without being conscious that you are doing it. I apprehend you are following the pernicious counsel of Lawyer Rapine, who will, eventually, if you do not change your proceedings, and that imme-

diately, make a prey of your person, and, lastly, of your estate. If you do not accept the present offer of mediation and moderation, you will seal your own condemnation, for none will approve of revenge or retaliation over much, as it would imply a malignancy of heart which I am not willing to suppose you possess ; for, if I am compelled, I must say more in my justification than I am otherwise willing to say. Therefore, consider it as a fall-out between lovers, of which there are innumerable instances, and be not revengeful, which is different from all other ladies, who have sensibilities of the heart, and usually a tender solicitude of the mind for the welfare of their former lover ; and I have been, you must admit, a zealous advocate in the cause of your sex, and those charms and influences which have a bewitching and magical influence upon society, and particularly upon myself ; for I may have been classed as your most devoted and ardent of admirers, and perhaps the most impetuous ; and for this very impetuosity, usually so desirable in a lover, you now condemn me at the tribunal of our common country, and endeavour to make me become a sacrifice to your revenge. Stop proceedings, I request of you ;

the reverend gentleman in the next room says it is within your ability; nor let my most anxious desire to oblige you, however mistaken, be my condemnation, for of the entire process of this action I am completely ignorant. But this I can do—make you the offer of an apology for my rudeness, and give you no cause in future for your personal alarm or your private tranquillity. Was you to proceed to the extremity of the law, which was framed for greater transgressions and abuse than mine can possibly amount to, it would inconvenience you as much as myself, and perhaps considerably more so; as you are a lady, and should avoid the breath of slander, the public gaze, and the public comments, for perchance some speck might be found in your conduct that would not bear the most rigid scrutiny, which is at the best avoided; lest by becoming exposed to too great a glare of light and animal heat, as the reaction of human passions and resentments common to every man, gentle as well as simple, some undefined comment or remark may escape the angry lips in the tempest of conflicting sentiments and opinions, as would lay all but the most virtuous and most prudent of reputations low in

the estimation of the public mind, and be considered common, as those unfortunates are said to be who walk the streets. At present the misunderstanding partakes more of the nature of lovers' quarrels than of deadly feud or resentment, as implied by the present prosecution against me, which is, as I learn, to be followed up with many more, until you drive me from the village, or myself you. Dreadful alternative! and are all our past agreeables to have so miserable and wretched a termination? I fear, and very greatly fear, for both our sakes, that you are ill advised, and the course of Lawyer Rapine will be the overthrow of both, either in body, or mind, or fortunes. It seems, from all I can learn, to be a struggle for the mastery; as if human passions and human resentments should have no limits, no bounds, and no restraints, human or divine, but entirely controlled by our own preconceptions, and what is equally probable, our own evil destiny. Pray stop before it is too late, put a controlling power on fate, assist Divine Providence in his good will and loving kindness to mankind, nor be you yourself the victim of your own condemnation, presenting to all aftertime a monument of your own wrath.

I request again you will stay the proceedings, before it is yet too late, and while they may be controlled ; if not for my sake, at least for your own and your sons. It is true I have been most fond of you, and am so still, under certain restrictions ; and let me further add, you have not a firmer friend and well-wisher than myself any where, although I must admit, in this instance, it may appear questionable, and certainly partakes of much of the principles of indiscretion and impropriety. I mean not to vindicate the imprudence of the step, or the infatuating influence that led me inauspiciously to your bower. Nonsense is equally the characteristic of a wise man and a fool, allowing for the difference of situations, times, and opportunities. In attempting to appease the resentment of an angry and fickle goddess like yourself, it may appear like bombast to solicit you further. In love, all men are equal : all elicit, and show forth the greatest of absurdities when giving the strongest proofs of their real attachments. What, still silent ! then I must proceed, as you do not speak, and continue my loquacity until it is your pleasure to command my silence. What have I not done—what have I not

suffered, on your account? An ass would be incompetent to the burden; a horse would be too noble an animal to bear the indignity. I have been hitherto your fool, and now your slave, and, to confess a truth, you drive the barbed shaft of the arrow of Cupid as far as it will go, and wound my feelings to see you so obdurate and unrelenting. Your anger against me, if persisted in, will recoil upon yourself in a tenfold degree. You, as a lady of sense and a woman of feeling and sensibility, should make allowance for that strong prepossession or preference with which you have influenced me, as to be called by some infatuation, and by others, again, madness. Let it not be said that we have both taken leave of our senses; my wish was to oblige you rather than increase your resentment against me. I acknowledge my folly in attempting to change your views of life; and had I thought you was not changed, and still the insensible woman I find you to be, I most certainly should have had too much respect for myself to have wished to interrupt your privacy and retirement. Let me again persuade you to suffer the affair, foolish in itself, and every way indicative of the presumption of human folly, when not

restrained by reason and common sense, now to subside ; proceed no further in this invidious cause, and suffer it now to sink into that oblivion from which it should never have arisen, nor would it, but for that senseless, inconsiderate, and contemptible blockhead, Lawyer Rapine, your present adviser, if not the future destroyer of your peace and fortunes. If this is not your intention, bad consequences will follow, and you may live long enough to be convinced I speak the truth, and regret you did not accept my present overture of a mutual forbearance."

The heroine, in reply to the elaborate speech of our hero, evinced, contrary to the general character of the sex, rather a taciturnity of disposition, than talkative or communicative ; which is the more to be regretted, as no doubt she had reasons as sufficient in her own mind for the prosecution, as Ardent had produced or alleged for the relinquishing of it. She began, reader, with such memorable words as should never be forgotten by any future lovers wishing to try the same experiment, of bringing their love adventures before the tribunal of their country, that a jury might decide who was most in the right ;

when it would have been far more decorous to have passed it over as lovers' quarrels usually are, by kissing and making it up again ; and this might have been done without feeling counsel for the advice, and then knocking their heads together like blockheads as they were — one for attempting to reclaim a vicious woman, and the other in not controlling her resentment until it was too late to be rectified. The injury and insult had been given, and these pages are the consequence ; for that which was only deemed an individual transaction originally, was now thought worthy of becoming a public one, proving that from small beginnings great consequences are frequently produced. Shakspeare, for instance, invading the deer-park, and the prosecution ensuing, may have laid the foundation of his future dramatic works. Cervantes; his contemporary, from misfortune became the writer of his own life and adventures, under the mock heroics of the Don and Sancho Panza.

Should the present disclosure of the Author's sentiments be thought ambiguous, the future progress of the work will amply prove he has been by no means insensible to the rewards usu-

ally the attendants upon knight-errantry in this hitherto supposed civilized country, but which contains, up to the present period, many barbarous relics of the feudal times and more romantic parts of our history, that are not yet eradicated from our laws and institutions, one of which will be made known in the future part of this history.

“ You began, Ardent, and I will finish it,” were the memorable words spoken by the lady in the parlour of the magistrate; she also continued, “ I have heard your speech, and given it considerable attention, as it is probably the last I may ever hear from you. There was a time you would not have used me as you have since done; but that time is gone by,—you are angry with me, and I am yet more enraged with you.”

“ But, madam, it has arisen from an excess of infatuation and regard for your welfare, as well as that of the public; who, I conceived, in the first instance, was in danger from your proceedings, but afterward, wishing to be confirmed by yourself that you had altered your course of life, that I might make such meritorious conduct known round your district, and redeem you from

the odium that was cast upon you by the Reverend Dr. Allworthy, I have, it is true, risked not only your peace of mind but my own also in the attempt to oblige you, and, as I had erroneously thought, to benefit you. I could not give you a stronger proof of my attachment than this, was you to see it in a proper light, and not through an improper medium."

The lady shook her head scornfully, and replied, "No, Ardent, you began and I will finish. It now remains to be proved whether you shall drive me from the village or I drive you—one or both shall take place. And observe what I now say, for I will not deceive you, when I tell you, that my last guinea shall be employed in ruining you: you have destroyed my peace of mind, and now I will use my utmost resentment to ruin yours, or deprive you of that independence of mind you have so unaccountably assumed over me. Hostilities and perpetual hostilities you are to expect from me without intermission, except what is created by the law's delay. A woman, angered as I have been, naturally enough seeks for revenge: I am not deficient in friends or advisers, and, as you may

suppose, their advice is to prosecute you to the utmost extent of the law, and any expense or inconvenience I will cheerfully undergo to accomplish your ruin. So appeal not to my lenity,—I have endured what no woman with the smallest particle of spirit remaining could submit to. Was I to do otherwise, I should be compromising my own character and the respect that is due to myself, which I am determined to redeem at the cost of yours.”

“ Very plainly and intelligibly spoken ; indeed, madam, I may say your eloquence is worthy of a better cause ; your remaining sense of propriety is ill directed, and diverted into wrong channels ; you appear to be following the ill counsel of some villain long practised in the arts of chicanery and law proceedings, who must have given you false assurances, to obtain, perhaps, an influence over your person and property. You are, to say the least, possessed of the most unbridled resentment, with anger insatiable ; and, since I find it impracticable to impress you with the importance due to the respectability of your own character and reputation, you must even seek your own destruction ; and before a very few years

are over your head, you will find it so, notwithstanding your able coadjutor—for the man who would not refrain from ruining his own wife, will not hesitate to ruin you. And now, madam, I no longer importune you in the language of humility, but rather caution you against yourself and your ill advisers, for surely the anger of the Almighty is about to overtake you. My downfall, even could you accomplish it, will not restore your character or your reputation; and the continuance of those respectful attentions you have been accustomed to receive will depend upon yourself and your own conduct, and not upon what I can say or do. Your machinations and contrivances will have an end, and when it is too late, possibly you will think of Heaven's decree, and the injury you are doing to society and to me."

Without waiting for a further reply from the lady, Ardent took his leave, by bowing to her, and joined the worthy magistrate in the next room, who inquired if the lady had consented to withdraw the articles of the peace against him.

"By no means, sir, but quite the contrary; and, as I have no friends in this part of the coun-

try, so far removed from the centre of the forest, I request permission to return for those sureties you require of me, and, when I have obtained them, I will punctually return."

"By all means, Mr. Ardent—constables, Mr. Ardent's word is sufficient, your restraint is no longer necessary."

"I thank you, sir, for my freedom," rejoined Ardent, "and will not abuse your kindness." Then, bowing to the worthy and most respectable clergyman and magistrate, he left his house.

"And now, constables," said Ardent, "as you brought me with you here, I will take you back with me."

"We did but our duty, sir," said the rustic authorities.

"Oh! you performed it to admiration, my good fellows! a pair of more diligent and faithful servants, the king's and the public service cannot produce; and the very rent in my shirt is a proof of your zeal, and would be a good witness in favour of your being still continued upon the peace establishment."

Our hero and the constables again seated themselves in the vehicle of conveyance, and

travelled with equal rapidity homewards, where hundreds waited their arrival, in expectation of hearing that Ardent was gone to the county prison, there to remain until the quarter-sessions, when the trial for assault and burglary was expected to come on—for so Lawyer Rapine had made it his business to circulate in their absence throughout the village. But the particular entrance of our hero himself, leading, as it were in triumph, the captive constables in their turn, is worthy of narration in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXX.

ARDENT and his friends, the village constables, were no sooner seated in the post-chaise and on their return homewards, than our hero, in his usual character of a meditative man, began to recall to his mind all the incidents of the day.—Torn from his bed, like a badger by mastiff dogs, as he was by a couple of rude constables, who seemed to arrest him for high treason or for some very important business, had he been Jonathan Wild himself, he could not have been more unceremoniously laid hold of and dragged along by two men, who fancied they showed their courage and authority by treating him with all the incivility of a condemned criminal. And happy was he now, comparatively speaking, in the turn of the scales which the polite justice of the peace had secured to him, by admitting him to be free for a short time upon his parole of honour, which he was resolved should not be abused, that the good gentleman might not have to allege upon

any future emergency, to any other oppressed individual, that he could not grant the same indulgences which had been extended to himself. It was quite a new business to Ardent, but those who knew the world best asserted it was all a bottle of smoke, for there was nothing to make so great a disturbance about. The well-wishers of Ardent were equally numerous with those of the opposite party, and when they heard their game bird had been caught in his nest, and before he had adjusted his plumage in the rising sunbeams of the morning, they laughed excessively. All seemed to enjoy the day's sport as a day of peculiar extravagance and fun; for to think, among the generality of mankind, is a painful task, and they feel themselves obliged to any individual who will divest them of that operation of the mind, by exciting and exhilarating their risible faculties. It really was a village treat, a pastime, a gala-day for the idlers, the lovers of chat and the lovers of scandal. Hundreds had been to the top of the hill that day, to see if any glimpse could be obtained or tidings learned of the serio-comic performers; and mid-day approached and passed away with

rapid strides, when all was impatient and elevated upon the utmost pinnacle of expectancy for the event, as if it was the arrival of some great conqueror. The hour of two was announced by the village clock striking its memento to the auditors, silent as the dreary wastes by which they were surrounded, when, at that precise interval of time, between the termination of the second hour of noon and the commencement of the third, was our hero seen descending the hill in double quick time,—the post-boy smacked his whip, the horses flew with the rapidity of the wind, the wheels whirled in rapid succession, and our hero was announced by the joyful acclamations of the multitude—accompanied as he was by his brace of savages, as if just arrived from a distant land, or the *terra incognita* of unknown regions.

Having deposited safely his worthy neighbours, he alighted for a few seconds only at his own door—fresh horses were in readiness; again he mounted the vehicle, and, with the rapidity of lightning, dashed through the village in a twinkling to the further extremity of the parish,—in fact, to the house of the worthy minister, the

Reverend Mr. Aimwell, made known to him his errand, and, by the simplicity of his address, soon obtained for himself not only a patient hearing, but a promise of support in this momentous period of the trial of his philosophy, which, it must be admitted, was on this day put to an unusually severe mortification in his self-esteem.

The hour of three was now pointed on the dial's plate, and the solemn notice of the fleetness of time was again struck upon the sensitive organs of our hero in the science of love-making, or rather love-extinguishing: he was now, from long talking, debating, and conversations, as well as travelling up hill and down dale, very faint from want of sustenance, which was readily supplied him by the respectable pastor of the village flock. But as the conversation itself may be more explanatory to the reader, we will just give the horses a breathing, while we relate what passed between the Reverend Mr. Aimwell and the hero of this history.

"I heard of your precipitate flight, Mr. Ardent, without staying to take leave of your friends, or even informing them of your intention to take an

early ride before breakfast,—but have you breakfasted since?”

“ No, Sir : not a particle of food did my Cerberus’s permit me to have, while I was in their custody ; and since I have had no time, so urgent was my necessity for seeing you and my friend Mr. Foresight.”

“ We have just sat down to dinner,” said the reverend gentlemen ; “ therefore take your refreshment with us, it will not detain you many minutes, and I will accompany you to Mr. Foresight : we will both be your sureties upon this occasion, and then be cautious how you visit the lady again.”

“ The lady has declared this day, Sir, that she will not cease to inconvenience me all she can, even to my ruin, or her own, or both of us.”

“ We will try to prevent it, Mr. Ardent : your cause is our cause, and we will endeavour to remove this pest to religion and society out of the village.”

“ Your condescension and kindness, reverend Sir, I can never be sufficiently grateful for ; neither can I be too thankful for your prompt civility and politeness in this strange business. I am in the greatest amazement at all circumstances, and my

mind has been so whirled with conflicting sentiments, that I am scarcely in possession of my own reason.'

"Take a glass of wine, Ardent, to raise your spirits; I fear you have a great deal to go through, before the lady and her ill-advisers will leave you to peace and quietness. She was in want of other victims, and you have timely prevented the fresh abuse of the public confidence, and now her anger is, as may be very naturally expected, exasperated to the greatest degree against you, who has counterplotted all her schemes for the subjection of fresh victims and fresh constitutions to her depraved appetite, to be hurled from her with the same ignominy you have experienced, unless they conform to her principles in every particular, and aid and assist to uphold her immorality. You must now prepare yourself to expect the rough as well as the smooth; she has caught you napping, and she will make the most of her advantage. I wish we could remove her from the village—possibly she may leave after she has done punishing of you. When you are ready, we will get into the chaise, and call upon Mr. Foresight."

Ardent bowed, and they both got into the vehi-

cle, and were soon set down at the door of Mr. Foresight's house.

"Our friend here," said the Reverend Mr. Aimwell, "has got into trouble: he has articles of the peace exhibited against him, and he requires two friends to help him through it."

"I will join you directly, Mr. Aimwell," said Mr. Foresight.

Mr. Aimwell took the opportunity of a short interval to give Mr. Ardent the following admonitory counsel: "I think," said he, "this will be a lesson to you, how you endeavour to reclaim a vicious woman again. Her character begins now to develop itself, and if she is the woman we have some reason to expect, her utmost malice is to be dreaded and apprehended. She will not fall alone without an attempt to drag you down the precipice with her; therefore you must be careful how you give her fresh opportunities to injure you. It is very likely she will hold out other lures to tempt you to commit yourself."

"I have more sorrow, Sir," replied Ardent, "on her account, than I have on my own."

"We will proceed, and get you from jeopardy this once; but beware of the future."

“ Gentlemen, I am quite ready to join you,” said Mr. Foresight.

The parties being seated, they were soon seen driving through the village, in all the pomp of a splendid victory, so anxiously kind were the friends of Ardent to remove the shackles of restraint from our hero. Leaving behind them the village—notorious in its history in by-gone time for scenes of past carousals—the haunt of the robber, midnight assassin, and other disturbers of the public peace. Occasionally genius, by way of contrast, resided amidst its fairy bowers; and the monarch himself in his early years of festive jollity.

It was night-fall before the parties returned. Ardent was placed by his friends safely in his own house, and they proceeded homewards, apparently pleased with the opportunity of upholding oppressed virtue and discountenancing vice.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It will appear in the course of this history, that our Hero had not yet filled up the full measure of his indiscretion. He was to be acted upon in his turn by his own angry feelings, which was, indeed, the pretence for carrying on the suit, in the expectation of still further provoking him to commit himself by some unguarded word or action; and it is worthy of remark, that he was as prone to resentment as to love, and the one was as easily excited as the other, by his capricious and artful mistress.

The bottle of smoke, as it was said to be by some, proved eventually a serious flame, for it communicated to his own house, and raged there with all the violence, not only of disappointed affection, but of the bitterest class of feelings that could well operate upon sensitive minds, which are always to be comprised in the term of infatuation, or infatuated love, when connected with an unprincipled character in either sex, and which

terminates in the destruction of one or both of the parties. It may be described in metaphorical phraseology, not so generally understood by all readers, because the flowers of rhetoric, and the tropes and figures of bombast, are admitted only in works of fiction, or extravagantly complimentary adulation; and as neither are the ostensible reasons for inserting flowery diction in the root of plain narration. It is obviously the author's intention to sink the character in the estimation of his reader, rather than exalt her.

It may be difficult to describe the love-adventures of a heroine, so celebrated as the lady in this history is known to be, as to attempt to describe again the witches of Macbeth, after the immortal Shakespeare. There have been singularities in the human character, since his time, and such have not been fully delineated to the world, as to become a by-word, so forcibly does a true portrait strike the imagination and judgment of the reader, or by-stander, if faithfully depicted or portrayed.

The infatuating fairy of this paradisaical land of promise was an enchantress of that magic school, that deludes or decoys its victims into fatal secu-

rities, by relying on their honours or their virtues, when they are palpably not meriting the praise of either, and are as pernicious to society on land, in bowery forests, and Idalian groves, as the cyprian mermaids were always supposed to be to sailors navigating those parts, where they may have most presided, as the sea-port towns of this and other maritime states.

Of such description was the bewitching, influential lady, that controlled the future destiny of our hero. She may have been considered the mermaid of the forest, as much so as our hero was the Marplot of the forest ; for no sooner did he understand any trick was going to be played off upon the public mind, than his busy face was sure to be seen there, or thereabouts, a sort of Paul Pry, into things that did not concern him any more than they did the man in the moon, who, by the-by, is supposed to see and know more of the amours of this country and of the world, than could possibly be contained within these pages. But such ingenuity that has been practised within the knowledge of our hero, shall be freely communicated for the public information.

It has always been maintained that our hero was

a sort of Jack the Giant-Killer, as certain heroes were termed in former days, who attempted to reform one particular vice prevailing in that age: as, for instance, some great man living in a great castle, having run away with or decoyed a virgin into his possession, with the intention to ravish her, as was the phraseology of that period, and significant enough in expression to be retained in this history. The individual coming to her rescue or deliverance, from such restraint, had usually applied to him either the title of her lover, her knight, or her champion and deliverer.

It is not intended to insist upon or improve the idea started; that the lady of whom so much has been said was a fair captive, thus entrained, or entranced, in the magic bowers of voluptuousness by any modern giant, or great man of this kingdom, as it would be invidious to make such an inference; but the inuendo may be improved, or rejected, as may seem necessary at a future part of this history.

Our hero, always fruitful in expedients and principles, or reasons to guide his conduct, was never at a loss for conjecture, and could not believe the lady was so mad as she reported her-

self to be, not in losing all for love, which is very common, but in risking all to satisfy her resentment, which was inextinguishable, proving that within such magic bowers, an enchantress did preside, whose wand was so seducing as never to be relinquished but with life.

Our hero may have been considered either a giant-killer, or the giant himself, in love adventures, for sure none were ever so fraught with ill-adventures, as the unfortunate prepossessions of our hero involved him in. He could not divest himself of the idea that she was a fair Rosamond in disguise; all appearances tended to confirm his late suppositions, however preposterous they might be; and to rescue her from the poisoned bowl or dagger that awaited her dereliction of principle was his ambition, until, by the very means he took to prevent her fall, he hastened her ruin. She was destined to partake of both the dagger's point, in the painful recollections of the past, and the poisoned bowl, when she could do no more than offer up her orisons for forgiveness, and expire.

END OF VOL. III.

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